Université de Montréal

Dramatizing Whoredom: Prostitution in the Work of Tennessee Williams

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Thèse présentée à la Faculté des arts et des sciences
en vue de l'obtention du grade de
Philosophiae Doctor (Ph.D.)
en études anglaises

août 2010

Université de Montréal
Faculté des arts et des sciences

Cette thèse intitulée:

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a été évaluée par un jury composé des personnes suivantes:

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Résumé de synthèse

Cette thèse explore le leitmotiv de la prostitution dans l'oeuvre de Tennessee Williams et soutient que la plupart des personnages de Williams sont engagés dans une forme de prostitution ou une autre. En effectuant une analyse formaliste des textes de Williams qui illustrent toute forme de prostitution, avec une attention particulière à quatre grandes pièces, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955), *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958) et *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1959), cette présente étude fait valoir que le dramaturge utilise un mode de fiction—le gothique—en lien avec une pratique transgressive—la prostitution—pour relier les classes sociales et troubler les catégories de prostitution. Ce faisant, Williams offre une vision plus représentative et nuancée de la prostitution.

Théoriquement, cette thèse repose sur des oeuvres critiques portant sur le genre, la sexualité et l'histoire de Michel Foucault, David Savran, et Michael Paller afin de situer la dramaturgie de Williams dans le contexte historique et culturel des années 1940 et 1950. La première partie de cette thèse (chapitres un et deux) fournit de nombreuses informations autobiographiques et biographiques qui expliquent pourquoi la prostitution est devenue le thème de prédilection pour Williams. Cette section met l'accent sur sa préoccupation constante à l'égard de sa prostitution artistique (en prostituant son art pour le succès commercial) et sexuelle (en payant pour des prostitués). Cette partie présente également un inventaire détaillé des prostituté(e)s, que je divise en

trois catégories: 1) la prostitution des enfants, 2) la prostitution masculine et 3) la prostitution féminine. La deuxième partie de cette étude, composée des chapitres trois et quatre, identifie les personnages de Williams qui s'engagent dans une forme de prostitution morale. Ce groupe comprend ceux qui tirent directement profit de la prostitution des autres ainsi que ceux qui se marient uniquement pour un gain financier ou une promotion sociale ou les deux.

L'oeuvre de Williams résiste la représentation stéréotypée de la prostituée en littérature comme étant uniquement de sexe féminin ou provenant des classes sociales défavorisées ou les deux. La prostituée de Williams n'est ni une figure romantique ni une rebelle menaçant la société. Cette thèse conclut qu'en représentant des enfants prostitués, des femmes de rue, des prostitués de sexe masculin, des souteneurs, des proxénètes, des propriétaires de bordels, des leaders corrompus et des personnes qui se prostituent en concluant des mariages de convenance, Williams a effectivement et incontestablement dramatisé la prostitution sous toutes ses formes.

Mots-clés: Théâtre américain, prostitution, théâtre, prostitué, sexualité, mariage, adultère, vingtième siècle, pièces, nouvelles

Abstract

This dissertation explores the leitmotif of prostitution in the work of Tennessee Williams and provocatively contends that most Williams characters are engaged in one form of prostitution or another. Performing a close reading of relevant texts by Williams that illustrate any form of prostitution, with special attention given to four major plays, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955), *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958), and *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1959), this study argues that the playwright uses a transgressive mode of fiction—the gothic—in conjunction with a transgressive practice—prostitution—to link the social classes and to blur the boundaries between the literal and the figurative prostitutes. In so doing, Williams offers a more calibrated, nuanced view of prostitution.

Theoretically, this dissertation reposes on critical works on gender, sexuality, and history by Michel Foucault, David Savran, and Michael Paller to fully contextualize Williams's work and to discuss the attitude towards, and place of, prostitution within the cultural zeitgeist of the 1940s and 1950s. Part A (chapters one and two) provides ample autobiographical and biographical evidence to explain that Williams's use of prostitution as a recurring theme results from his lifelong preoccupation with, and indulgence in, an amalgam of prostitutions: artistic (prostituting his art for money) and sexual (paying for sex). It also presents a detailed inventory of the playwright's literal prostitutes, whom I classify into the following three categories: 1) child prostitution, 2) male prostitution, and 3) female prostitution. Part B, comprising chapters three

and four, engages with theory and history and identifies Williams characters who qualify as moral prostitutes. This group includes those who directly profit from prostituting others and those who marry exclusively for financial gain, social advancement, or both.

Williams's work eschews the stereotypical representation of prostitutes in literature as lower-class streetwalkers or morally bankrupt females or both. The playwright neither presents the prostitute as a romantic figure of transcendence nor as a rebellious one who threatens society. This dissertation concludes that by depicting child prostitutes, female streetwalkers, male hustlers, gay-for-pay studs, pimps, procurers, brothel operators, the morally compromised powers that be, and those who prostitute themselves by entering into loveless marriages, Williams has effectively and incontrovertibly dramatized whoredom in all of its forms.

Keywords: American Drama, Prostitution, Theatre, Prostitute, Sexuality, Marriage, Adultery, Twentieth Century, Plays, Short Stories

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Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr. Michael Eberle-Sinatra, for guiding me throughout this project. I am very grateful for his unwavering support, judicious feedback, and warm hospitality to my ideas. I owe gratitude to an early mentor of mine, Professor Stephen C. Campbell. He has hugely influenced the way I read and teach literature. I also want to thank Dr. Jean-Guy Poitras, former Academic Dean at the Université de Moncton (Campus d'Edmundston), who encouraged me to pursue doctoral studies.

It is a pleasure to recognize the wonderful Williams specialists I met at the Tennessee Williams Scholars' Conference in 2006 and 2007. I would especially like to thank Dr. Robert Bray and Dr. Annette Saddik for their kind words. I am thankful to my family for their love, respect, and support: Walter and Flora Gallant (grandparents), Armand and Denise Landry (parents), Debby Landry (sister), and Thérèse Vautour (mother-in-law). Support also came from enlightened friends: Dr. Josette Brun, Dr. Joyce Boro, Julie Norman, Katie Musgrave, and Dr. Catherine Leger.

A devotee of popular culture, I must acknowledge the tremendous influence of Madonna on my life. Her intelligence, talent, and work ethic

continue to inspire me. I would like to express my gratitude to a brilliant Stendhalian scholar and dear friend, Dr. Janine Gallant. Her exalted praise of me and my work sustained me during the difficult moments. Finally, I owe my deepest gratitude to my loving wife, Lise Vautour. I can never adequately thank her for so generously nurturing me over the long haul. Undoubtedly, she is the love of my life, and I dedicate this dissertation to her.

Introduction

> "If it was truly necessary to make room for illegitimate sexualities, it was reasoned, let them take their infernal mischief elsewhere: to a place where they could be reintegrated, if not in the circuits of production, at least in those of profit. The brothel and the mental hospital would be those places of tolerance: the prostitute, the client, and the pimp, together with the psychiatrist and his hysteric—those 'other Victorians,' as Steven Marcus would say—seem to have surreptitiously transferred the pleasures that are unspoken into the order of things that are counted. Words and gestures, quietly authorized, could be exchanged there at the going rate. Only in those places would untrammeled sex have a right to (safely insularized) forms of reality, and only to clandestine, circumscribed, and coded types of discourse. Everywhere else, modern Puritanism imposed its triple edict of taboo, nonexistence, and silence." (4-5)
>
> -Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*

This dissertation explores the leitmotif of prostitution in the work of Tennessee Williams and provocatively suggests that most Williams characters are engaged in one form of prostitution or another. The review of the literature on Williams underscores the fact that the field of Williams studies is diverse, vibrant, and dynamic. Yet, what has been lacking in Williams scholarship is a focussed examination of prostitution, undoubtedly one of Williams's most prevalent themes.

In the last fifty years, criticism can be classified into these three categories: the examination of Williams's work, 1) as a focus of influence studies or intertextual comparisons, 2) as a study of the aesthetics of drama or performance studies, and 3) as a study of sexuality or psychology. In regards to

the last category, the vast majority of articles that have been written on Williams's representation of sexuality have completely ignored the topic of prostitution. The few articles that do address the topic, however, pay short shrift to it by simply alluding to prostitutes, gigolos, and procurers. Since these articles do not offer a sustained discussion of prostitution, a fact that highlights the importance of my project, I have undertaken a comprehensive and innovative study of the much neglected theme that will fill a void in Williams scholarship. Thus, this dissertation should prompt scholars to pay closer attention to the recurring persona of the prostitute in Williams texts and re-evaluate the way they look at him or her. The novel aspect of my dissertation is underlined by the fact that the MLA International Bibliography only includes two citations on Williams that actually use the word prostitution or prostitutes in their titles.

These rare works that draw immediate attention to prostitution in Williams's work are Philip Weissman's, "A Trio of Tennessee Williams Heroines: The Psychology of Prostitution" (1960) and pre-eminent Williams scholar Allean Hale's "Of Prostitutes, Artists and Ears" (1990). However, both articles are inadequate for the purpose of my study. Weissman's study, which I address in chapter two, is useful for its discussion of three female prostitutes, but it is problematic for two reasons: 1) it perpetuates the stereotype of prostitutes as being psychologically damaged females and, 2) it gives a false impression of Williams prostitutes, as there are as many male prostitutes as

females. Hale's article focuses mainly on intertextual comparisons between Williams and Vincent Van Gogh. As a result, her study does not focus sufficiently on prostitution, but it is helpful, as it provides an important biographical detail about Williams's parents that I mention in chapter one and that speaks to a form of prostitution on which I elaborate in chapter four.

Though scant critical attention has been given to Williams's ubiquitous theme of prostitution, a few Williams biographers and scholars have broached the topic in their work. Biographies by Lyle Leverich (1995), Ronald Hayman (1993), and Donald Spoto (1986) have provided significant information about Williams's life as it relates to prostitution. Nancy M. Tischler's invaluable study, *Tennessee Williams: Rebellious Puritan* (1961) provides similar biographical information in conjunction with a close reading of Williams's works during his prolific period between 1944 and 1961. Other scholars have addressed the theme of prostitution in Williams, but they have limited their investigation to a few short stories and the play, *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958). Such articles, which include Andrew Sofer's "Self-Consuming Artifacts: Power, Performance and the Body in Tennessee Williams' *Suddenly Last Summer*" (1995) and Annette J. Saddik's "The (Un)Represented Fragmentation of the Body in Tennessee Williams's 'Desire and the Black Masseur' and *Suddenly Last Summer*" (1998), do not extensively examine the topic.

This dissertation will provide a more detailed study of prostitution in Williams texts that builds on the critical groundwork laid by Steven Bruhm's important article, "Blackmailed by Sex: Tennessee Williams and the Economics of Desire" (1991), John M. Clum's "The Sacrificial Stud and the Fugitive Female in *Suddenly Last Summer*, *Orpheus Descending*, and *Sweet Bird of Youth*" (1997), and David Savran's seminal New Historicist study, *Communists, Cowboys, and Queers: The Politics of Masculinity in the Work of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams* (1992). Rather than concentrate on the politics of masculinity in Williams's work, I will focus on Savran's close reading of Williams's short fiction (and its conjunction of sex and money), Clum's cogent analysis of Williams's "so-called punishment plays" (Sofer 336), and on Bruhm's discussion of the libidinal economy at work in Williams's *oeuvre*.

Initially, this dissertation planned to cover Williams's aforementioned fertile period. Because of the recent publication of collections of previously unpublished one-act plays by Williams, and their importance to my critical discussion of prostitution, I have widened the scope of my study. The short plays included in the edited collections *Mister Paradise and Other One-Act Plays* (2005) by Nicholas Moschovakis and David Roessel and *The Traveling Companion and Other Plays* (2008) by Saddik have given me a better appreciation for Williams's work pre-1944 and post-1961. More importantly,

these one-act plays have been extremely useful, since they further underscore Williams's use of prostitution as a controlling trope.

Theoretically, this dissertation reposes on critical works on gender, sexuality, and history by Michel Foucault, Savran, and Michael Paller's *Gentlemen Callers: Tennessee Williams, Homosexuality, and Mid-Twentieth-Century Drama* (2005) to fully contextualize Williams's work and to discuss the attitude towards, and place of, prostitution within the cultural zeitgeist of the 1940s and 1950s. The epigraph to this introduction underscores Foucault's claim in *The History of Sexuality* that the main incentive for a society to identify sexual behaviours is to be able to control (read: condemn) them (4-5). Such an argument is relevant to my critical investigation of prostitution, as Peter Brooks points out in *Reading for the Plot*: "Policing and surveillance are directed at the body and its deviant sexual power. And here all themes converge on the question of prostitution" (153). Therefore, a Foucauldian theoretical stance is useful for this dissertation.

In his article, "Marginalia: *Streetcar*, Williams, and Foucault" (1993), William Kleb argues that one can view Williams's fiction "as a kind of imaginative prefiguration of Foucault's theory" (27). Key Foucauldian concepts, such as surveillance, punishment, confession and exclusion, are applicable to Williams's work, especially in light of the punishments suffered by Williams's quintessential prostitutes, Blanche DuBois and Chance Wayne.

More specifically, the fact that Blanche goes from "opening a brothel for the neighboring army camp" (Tischler 145) to leaving for the mental hospital ties in perfectly to Foucault's discussion of "places of tolerance" (*The History of Sexuality* 4).

Foucault views the brothel as a "place of tolerance" where the

> prostitute, the client and the pimp [. . .] seem to have surreptitiously transferred the pleasures that are unspoken into the order of things that are counted. Words and gestures, quietly authorized, could be exchanged there at the going rate. (*The History of Sexuality* 4)

His analysis connects with Bruhm's discussion of the economics of desire operative in Williams's work and how that economy is inextricably linked with, but subservient to, the political heterosexist economy (528-529). This dissertation also draws on Laura Maria Agustín's theoretical model for the study of commercial sex. I examine the sites of, and participants in, the sex industry in Williams's fiction and how these "social actors" (Agustín 622) are implicated in the "libidinal economy" (Bruhm 529). Agustín's sex-industry framework disrupts the dualisms surrounding the prostitution debate.

Methodologically, this dissertation performs a close reading of relevant Williams texts that illustrate any form of prostitution, with special attention given to these four major plays: *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955), *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958), and *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1959). Although past studies on Williams's work generally discuss one text

per chapter and follow a chronological order, my dissertation is not committed to such a traditional approach. Instead, I blend together a variety of texts (one-act plays, full-length plays, short stories, and the novel, *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*) in order to draw intertextual similarities between them. This approach guarantees a richer exploration of the intertwined issues of sexual morality, prostitution, politics, and marriage in Williams's work.

Moreover, I have divided the body of this dissertation into two parts. Part A (chapters one and two) relies on articles by social historians, Williams's letters and *Memoirs*, and biographies on Williams to answer these four questions: 1) Why has the world's oldest profession (prostitution) been linked to Williams's (playwrighting) since the birth of professional theatre? 2) What accounts for the leitmotif of prostitution in Williams's canon? 3) How is Williams's depiction of the prostitute figure similar to, or different from, the stereotypical representations of prostitutes in literature? 4) Do Williams prostitutes cut across the lines of gender and class?

Part B (chapters three and four) engages with theory and history. It is also undergirded by four critical queries: 1) Besides the obvious prostitute-client relationship, what other forms of prostitution does Williams depict in his work? 2) How does Williams represent the intermediaries (pimps, procurers, and profiteers) involved in prostitution? 3) What is Williams's moral stance on

the issue of prostitution? 4) How does the playwright address marital unions that appear closer to an institutionally sanctioned form of prostitution?

In chapter one titled, "Tennessee's 'Trades': The Interconnection between Theatre and Prostitution," I establish the notorious link between prostitution and the theatre since the 1570s by presenting compelling evidence from social historians about the interconnection between prostitution, the "falling trade" (Shugg 296), and theatre, the "base trade" (Lenz 833). I provide ample autobiographical and biographical evidence to shed light on Williams's involvement in both trades. This chapter suggests that Williams's use of prostitution as a recurring theme results from his lifelong preoccupation with, and indulgence in, an amalgam of prostitutions: artistic (prostituting his art for money) and sexual (paying for sex).

Chapter two, entitled "'there's just two kinds of people, the ones that are bought and the buyers!': Williams's Representation of the Prostitute-Client Relationship," presents a detailed inventory of the literal prostitutes in Williams's work. I use numerous tropes to connect the playwright's prostitutes, whom I classify into the following three categories: 1) child prostitution, 2) male prostitution, and 3) female prostitution. The chapter also addresses the alleged homophobia present in Williams's work, a charge made by one camp of gay critics, most notably Clum and Alan Sinfield. I present the arguments of another camp of gay critics, such as Savran and Paller, who properly address

the *mores* of mid-twentieth-century America to counter claims that Williams's work is homophobic.

In chapter three, titled "Pimps, Procurers, Profiteers, and the Politics of Prostitution," I situate Williams within the Southern Gothic literary tradition through a detailed discussion of his Gothic plays, *Suddenly Last Summer* and *Sweet Bird of Youth*. This comparative study serves as an effective starting point for a discussion of the pimps, procurers, and profiteers that proliferate in Williams's work. The chapter refers to the characteristics of male power as elaborated by Kathleen Gough as well as Luce Irigaray's notion of "hom(m)o-sexuality" in relation to the discussion of patriarchal control and the commodification of women in Williams's work. I argue that Williams characters who directly profit from prostituting others qualify as (moral) prostitutes.

Finally, chapter four, entitled "'A Sort of Self-Destroying, Legal Prostitution': The Whoredom of a Loveless Marriage," discusses another group of (moral) prostitutes: those who marry exclusively for financial gain or social advancement or both. I address Stanley Kauffmann's argument about Williams's negative portrayal of marriage and maintain that Williams's representation of the institution subverts the sanitized depictions of domestic realism presented on television post-World War II. This chapter examines

numerous examples of dysfunctional and loveless marriages, which are often undermined by infidelity.

Chapter One:

Tennessee's "Trades": The Interconnection between Theatre and Prostitution

> "The theater is seen through prostitution seeking eyes because the eyes, quite naturally and reflexively, seek prostitution. That is, they are attracted by, submit to, and enjoy visual stimulation. And, as mere bodily organs, the eyes, like the sex organs, cannot distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate pleasure. Thus, the theater is caught in a double bind. For the theater to be the theater it must rely upon visual display, and the more spectacular its display, the more it provokes the (false) erotics of sensory stimulation and the more it resembles a whorehouse, where the duplicity of pretense is marketed for profit. Finally, although all spectacle is charged with sensory pleasure and thus dangerous, the professional theater is doubly damned because it sells such pleasure for profit." (841)
>
> –Joseph Lenz, "Base Trade: Theater as Prostitution"

> "Tennessee had a lifelong fascination with prostitutes, and never did understand why bringing a hooker to a fancy dinner party wasn't good form. He enjoyed listening to their life stories. From them he got a good deal of vicarious experience that went into his short stories and plays. He *felt* for them, and championed their right to be just as they were. But then, he viewed American society as an unjust and unequal arrangement that compelled most people to be whores of one form or another, selling their virtue to the rich. In short, prostitution was a metaphor for the American system." (18-19)
>
> –Dotson Rader, *Tennessee: Cry of the Heart*

To say that there is a historical link between prostitution and the theatre is quite an understatement. If prostitution has always been viewed as a lowly and immoral practice, the theatre has been denounced at various times in history as a vile art form. Numerous social historians have insisted on the interconnection between the two trades.

For example, Joseph Lenz, in his article, "Base Trade: Theater as Prostitution," discusses this well-known link between the theatre and prostitution:

> A predominant metaphor for the practice of the theater in Shakespeare's age was prostitution, an image the professional actor, playwright, and theater-owner helped to define and were defined by and to which they responded with ambivalence. From the beginning of the professional theater in the 1570s until its prohibition in 1642, its opponents—Stephen Gosson, Robert Greene, William Prynne, among many other—consistently associated the theater with prostitution. (833)[1]

Lenz adds that the theatre became known as "the base trade" in the public's imagination because of its association with disease and prostitution:

> The "disease" metaphor, no doubt revived by periodic outbreaks of the plague, continued to shape social policy long after the last lepers were ferried to Southwark in 1557, an event Mullaney carefully describes. In fact, the initial attempts to control the theaters were made on the basis of public health. (835)

He duly notes that, historically, both trades were inextricably linked because of their proximity to one another (the red-light district and the theatre district), and in some instances, because of their shared sites of exchange (the theatres themselves):

> The theater is viewed with prostitution-seeking eyes because the audience is seeking prostitutes. Without a doubt, the London theater and the plays performed in them were populated by whores and their bawds, in fiction and fact. Such depictions almost certainly reflected and encouraged the exchange of trade that took place around and within the theaters. If Ann Jennalie Cook is correct, then the theater was not merely placed near the brothel, it operated almost *as* a brothel, bringing prostitutes and clients together, providing the site of their contract if not their actual contact. (837)[2]

Wallace Shugg's article, "Prostitution in Shakespeare's London," further confirms the close association of the "falling trade" (296) with the theatre in Elizabethan and Jacobean London:

> But prostitution was by no means confined to the brothels on the Bank. It flourished also in the taverns and inns along the High Street that served travellers passing to and from the south of England. . . . Moreover, the crowds flocking to places of public amusement—such as the Bear Garden and the Globe, Rose, Hope, and Swan playhouses—made them natural haunts for the free-lance prostitute. In light of this, Pandarus' epilogue in *Troilus and Cressida*,[3] addressed to the pimps and bawds in the audience, could not help but fall on sympathetic ears. After a performance, the pleasure-minded playgoer could find a brothel within easy walking distance. (296-297)

Shugg surmises that it is highly unlikely that theatregoers, whether through their own personal experiences or indirectly from the accounts of their fellow scribes, were unaware of their proximity to prostitutes:

> Northeast of the City, the suburb of Shoreditch had earned a bad reputation, judging from numerous allusions by contemporary writers. Neighborhood prostitutes frequented London's first two playhouses, the Theatre and the Curtain, where for a time Shakespeare and his fellow actors performed. The afternoon performances over, these women could solicit along the highway at the many taverns and inns which accommodated travellers passing to and from the north. (298)

Theatre's bad reputation was not simply due to the fact that its establishments were located in notorious areas for prostitution[4] or that specific sections of theatres were active sites of prostitution.

After all, prostitution and the theatre are professions that respectively feature money-driven personae. On the one hand, one finds the pimp, the

procurer, and the producer, and, on the other, the actor and the prostitute, who is, according to Brooks, "an essentially theatric being, capable of making mask into meaning" (156). Lenz interprets the moral objection to the theatre during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods:

> Like a brothel, the theater houses "some lewd intrigue of Fornication"[5]; like a bawd, it advertises its product with effeminate gesture and costly apparel; like a prostitute, the motive is the same—money. Thus, the theater is a brothel, a pander, a whore, a way toward debauchery and a site for it. (833)

He sheds further light on the fears that fuelled the theatre's staunchest opponents:

> To attend a play, then, is to commit adultery, to lose one's chastity and one's manhood, a degradation of moral stature, social status, and sexual identity. Thus, for the Puritans at least, the theater's connection to prostitution has to do with both the site and the sight. First, the stage not only provides an occasion for female prostitutes to lure clients, it also provides a space for male prostitutes—the effeminate, cross-dressed actors themselves—to inveigle (male) children into "privy and unmeet contracts" and imprint wounds of love. (839)

Lenz fleshes out the ties that bind prostitution and the theatre, trades whose purpose is to satisfy the scopophiliac desires (among others) of their respective customers (johns and theatergoers):

> The theater is seen through prostitution seeking eyes because the eyes, quite naturally and reflexively, seek prostitution. That is, they are attracted by, submit to, and enjoy visual stimulation. And, as mere bodily organs, the eyes, like the sex organs, cannot distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate pleasure. Thus, the theater is caught in a double bind. For the theater to be the theater it must rely upon visual display, and the more spectacular its display, the more it provokes the (false) erotics of sensory stimulation and the more it resembles a whorehouse, where the duplicity of pretense is marketed for profit. Finally, although all spectacle is charged with sensory pleasure and thus dangerous,

> the professional theater is doubly damned because it sells such pleasure for profit. (841)

Of course, the historical link between prostitution and the theatre extends well beyond Shakespeare's time. For example, authorities in nineteenth-century France tried to stem the prostitution problem by cracking down on the illicit activities within specific urban establishments. Barbara Meil Hobson explains:

> Begun in 1810, the Paris morals police implemented increasingly strict regulations that prohibited prostitutes from frequenting cafes, taverns, or theaters—traditional meeting places for prostitutes and their customers. (29)

The European phenomenon of sexual transactions near or inside of theatres was a well-documented one in America as well, as several scholars have remarked.

While Lenz and Shugg establish the linking of prostitution and theatre in Shakespeare's time, social historians Lewis A. Erenberg, Timothy J. Gilfoyle, and Claudia D. Johnson do so in the context of nineteenth-century America. Erenberg's study, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930*, confirms the interconnection of prostitution and the theatre:

> All kinds of performances were housed under one roof, so that audiences in the 1830s might see drama, circus, opera and dance on the same bill. New York's Park Theater, despite a reputation as an elite house, had a relatively large room that permitted the masses to govern the stage. Each class had its own part of the theatre, but all attended—mechanics [working class men] in the pit, upper classes and women in the boxes, and prostitutes, lower class men, and blacks in the balcony. The rowdy audiences often yelled, stamped, drank and smoked during the performance. (15)

The seamy side of theatre culture throughout nineteenth-century America is further revealed in Gilfoyle's *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920*. Gilfoyle reports that,

> [l]eading establishments like the Bowery, Chatham, Olympic, and Park theatres permitted prostitution in the uppermost tier of seats. "Public prostitution [in the theater] is not noticed by law," admitted one observer. First-time middle-class visitors incredulously conceded that they "had not even dreamed of the improprieties then publicly tolerated in the third tier and galleries." (67)

Gilfoyle agrees that sexual assignations occurred in the upper reaches of the theatre.

However, he adds that they were also facilitated throughout nineteenth-century America:

> The secluded, semiprivate balcony labeled the third tier was reserved for sporting men to rendezvous with willing women. Managers defended the practice, arguing that prostitutes were a necessity in order for theaters to attract men and remain profitable. (110)[6]

Echoing Erenberg's earlier words about the Park Theater, Gilfoyle stresses that ill-reputed theatres were not the only bastions of such unlawful activities:

> Even the elite Park Theater, with its reputation for elegant, aesthetic drama, an exclusive clientele, and sponsorship by John Jacob Astor and John Beekman, hardly discouraged prostitution. During Tyrone Power's historic 1838 performance, at least eighty prostitutes roamed the third tier in search of customers. City marshals were sometimes called upon to remove patrons and prostitutes for their "very outrageous, turbulent and noisey" [sic] behavior. (110)

Claudia D. Johnson also links prostitution and theatre by focussing her attention entirely on the notorious third tier:

> The ritual of the third tier was apparently very simple: the entire inhabitants of houses of prostitution would customarily attend the theater in a body, entering the tier by a separate stairway an hour or two before the rest of the house was opened. Unlike the higher class prostitutes who sat throughout the theater and met customers there by pre-arrangement through such means as newspaper advertisements, the lower class prostitutes of the third tier made the initial contacts with their customers in the theater itself. Customers of long-standing took their places with the women in the third tier. Other men were introduced to these prostitutes when mutual friends took them up to the third tier from other parts of the house. . . . At times women would even leave the third tier and solicit customers in other parts of the house. (577-578)

Hobson comments on the sexual culture of the times:

> The highest class of sex partners lived in elegant apartments in quiet neighborhoods; they were the mistresses of wealthy men. Sexual services appeared to be readily available and aboveboard transactions. . . In this era, there was less of a distinction between paid and kept women. (15)[7]

More importantly, she acknowledges the notoriety of the third tier and lists other sites of the sex industry:

> Not only the third tier in theaters—a well-documented rendezvous for prostitutes and their customers—but also small vaudeville halls with bawdy shows (some featuring nude dancers) attracted prospective buyers of sexual services. (29)

So that they would not become "sporting men," young males were urged by moralists of the period to forego that which might arouse them (Gilfoyle 110).

According to Robert E. Riegel,

> [t]he young man was told to avoid highly seasoned foods, strong drinks, feather beds, erotic music, and the drama; the theaters were "but richly decorated and splendid gateways to the haunts of prostitution, to the chambers of death." (439)[8]

Riegel admits that the theatre was perceived by critics as dangerous not only for young men but also for young women:

> The obvious advice to a girl was that she should avoid such seductive activities as attending plays, reading romantic novels, listening to sensual music, dancing when clasped in a man's arms, and attending parties that might inspire romantic thoughts. (441)

C. Johnson reports that during the final two decades of the nineteenth century, theatres became more wholesome establishments.[9] She points out that even though the third tier was no longer operational in the well-established theatres, it played a major part of theatrical history for over half a century:

> Had the practice of reserving a tier for prostitutes been a short-lived, isolated instance, the subject would perhaps deserve no more than the passing reference which it has received. But such was not the case: records indicate that this particular relationship between the American theater and prostitution was widespread and covered a period of fifty years or more. Moreover, the relationship was not inconsequential; it had the most profound influence on every aspect of theatrical life. The third tier dictated the very design of the theater building, was at the foundation of theatrical economics, and was largely responsible for the reputation, and consequently the clientele, of the nineteenth-century theater. (580)

She ends her article by stating that "the theater has achieved respectability, but it has had to dissociate itself from prostitution" (584). I agree with Johnson's point that illicit money-for-sex transactions no longer occur within theatres, but I disagree with her claim that the American theatre can totally separate itself

from prostitution because the theme has dominated the American stage since the nineteenth-century fin-de-siècle.

In "Censoring *Sapho*: Regulating the Fallen Woman and the Prostitute on the New York Stage," Katie N. Johnson provides significant insight into debates surrounding prostitution and theatre culture during the Progressive Era:

> As anti-prostitution coalitions tried to erase harlots from the street, so the theater tried to tidy up its representations of prostitutes and their sisters in sin. In fact, one of the primary concerns in turn-of-the-century America was how a woman's sexual "fall" was portrayed on the stage. Interestingly, these efforts to control dramatic images of fallen women—prostitutes, in particular—paralleled Progressive anti-prostitution efforts. (167)

She maintains that the representation of prostitutes changed at the start of the twentieth century, so much so that the public became more and more riveted by plays about prostitution:

> In American society at the turn of the century there was a fascination with women's sexuality, especially that of women who were dubbed "fallen." There is a peculiar shift from nineteenth-century theater, in which women's virtue is celebrated, to turn of the twentieth-century drama, where the fallen woman or the prostitute takes center stage. . . . At the turn of the century in American theater, the hits of the season were invariably written about prostitutes or "fallen women." This trend culminated in the wave of "white-slave" plays from 1913 to 1915, which so dominated the New York stage that several critics complained of being inundated by brothel drama. Significantly, all these plays about prostitution were written by men. (168)

Theatre achieved further respectability in the twentieth century because of two other men who indulged in the aforementioned brothel drama: Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams.

Indeed, these transformational playwrights are linked together by their representation of the world's oldest profession throughout their work. Esther Merle Jackson links the two dramatists through a discussion of important historical moments:

> In an important sense, the theatre of Tennessee Williams is an aspect of a second American Renaissance, which, like the first, followed a great war. In the same way as the theatre of Eugene O'Neill seemed to emerge out of the heightened national consciousness which marked the close of World War I, so the theatre of Tennessee Williams seems to have been an expression of a new sense of identity which American arts and letters reflected at the conclusion of World War II. (ix)[10]

While O'Neill revolutionized American theatre in the 1920s by presenting both experimental and realistic plays instead of the standard burlesque and melodramatic productions, Williams changed the face of American drama in the 1940s and 1950s not only with his eclectic form of theatricality and beautiful poetic prose but also with his masterfully-drawn, complex, and memorable characters.[11] Dealing with prostitution much like turn-of-the-century naturalistic writers Stephen Crane and Theodore Dreiser in their respective texts, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893) and *Sister Carrie* (1900), O'Neill foregrounded the theme of prostitution in the drama of the twentieth century.

K. Johnson's work illustrates the prevalence of the theme of prostitution in theatre, let alone the work of Eugene O'Neill. In "'Anna Christie': the Repentant Courtesan, Made Respectable," she states the following:

> After all, one of O'Neill's very first plays, a one-act called *The Web* (1913), involved a prostitute character as did several of his later full-length plays (e.g., *The Great God Brown*, *Welded*, *Ah, Wilderness!*, *The Moon of the Caribees*, and *Long Day's Journey into Night*). (1)

O'Neill biographers Arthur and Barbara Gelb add to K. Johnson's inventory, declaring that "a total of fourteen streetwalkers ply their trade in seven other of his published plays; additional prostitutes figure as offstage characters in another five plays" (126). In my view, O'Neill's prostitutes are backgrounded, one-dimensional, and exclusively female.

One exception to the playwright's stereotypical representation of the prostitute is the titular character in *Anna Christie*, who definitely qualifies as a complex main character. K. Johnson agrees with critics of the play that Anna is fuelled by an independent (read: feminist) spirit:

> Anna's monologue is indeed an important moment in the landscape of representing prostitution in American drama, showing a strong woman who is her "own boss," as she herself puts it. Unfortunately, however, Anna too quickly gives up her anger and independence and, unlike Nora [in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*], does not walk out of the door. (4)

She concludes her article with a mixed review of O'Neill's 1921 play (which won the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1922):

> It may have appeared that O'Neill gave the prostitute-figure a dramaturgical face-lift, but in many respects Anna is the same

> repentant courtesan-figure audiences had seen so many times before. Her moments of female rage and independence are important ruptures in the American theatrical canon. Yet, like her dramaturgical sisters-in-sin, Anna swallows her anger and self-determination to live with Mat (who has threatened to kill her) and Chris (who has abandoned her). With such grim realities framing the heterosexual closure, I quite agree with O'Neill that audiences misunderstood the happy end. (9)

As groundbreaking as his predecessor O'Neill, Williams followed in O'Neill's footsteps with his own provocative treatment of prostitution.

Unlike O'Neill's, Williams's prostitutes are foregrounded, well-rounded, and of both sexes. Williams's non-judgmental treatment of the subject differs greatly from his literary predecessors (especially O'Neill), for he invests his prostitutes with a certain morality. Williams imbues his prostitutes with sexual agency; they are not simply body-parts whores. Williams expands the definition of prostitute to include those who prostitute themselves morally. In so doing, he places on the same moral plane those who get paid for sex, pay for sex, procure sex, or morally prostitute themselves for money.

Incidentally, much like the theatre of the twentieth century, American cinema has equally dealt with the topic of prostitution. In his general study of world prostitution, Nils Johan Ringdal notes that, "a six-hundred page American filmography concluded that between 1913 and 1990, as many as 338 Hollywood films used prostitution as a primary or secondary theme" (412). Obviously, this filmography includes several adaptations of plays by Williams,

since, as R. Barton Palmer states, "many successful American commercial theatre productions are very attractive to filmmakers and regularly provide the source for successful film releases" ("Hollywood in Crisis" 204). In the same article, Palmer addresses Williams's significant impact on the American film industry:

> With Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller, or William Inge, or, indeed, every other American playwright, of sole importance are the films in question, the screen versions themselves, which may be plumbed for their aesthetic, sociological, and institutional values or which may be examined to determine the whys and wherefores of the adaptation process. With Williams, in contrast, such a concentration on the films would disregard a connection between the author and Hollywood that is arguably much more important. For unlike other noted playwrights, Williams's work strongly influenced the development of the film industry itself. Indeed, it is hard to imagine the course of fifties and early sixties cinematic history without his plays as source material; and if we could imagine such a history, it would be quite different from the one that actually played out on the screen. To my knowledge, no other author through his works alone has had this kind of influence on the history of a national cinema. (205)[12]

Williams's use of prostitution as a literary trope began during his apprentice years.

For example, *Cairo! Shanghai! Bombay!* (1935)—Williams's first produced play (co-authored with Bernice Dorothy Shapiro) by The Garden Players, a Memphis theatrical troupe—featured two seamen who pick up prostitutes. Williams described the short play as follows: "A farcical but rather touching little comedy about two sailors on a date with a couple of 'light ladies.'" (qtd. in Leverich 152). In his second full-length play,[13] *Fugitive Kind*

(1937), which should not be confused with the 1960 film adaptation of Williams's *Orpheus Descending* titled, *The Fugitive Kind*, a blond prostitute named Bertha is the main character.

But what accounts for Williams's fascination with prostitution and his decision to use it as a leitmotif in his work? In the introduction to her edition of *Fugitive Kind*, titled, "A Playwright to Watch," Hale argues that Williams's father's extracurricular activities may have provided his son with the theme that would appear throughout his work:

> Knowing his father's reputation for "light ladies" doubtless roused Tom's interest; he would write a prostitute figure, variously called Bertha, Flora, or Bessie into several early one-acts: *The Dark Room*, *Hello From Bertha*,[14] *A Perfect Analysis Given by a Parrot*, and would develop her character sympathetically as Goldie in *Not About Nightingales*. (xvi)

Other scholar-critics and biographers have also mentioned Cornelius Williams's involvement with prostitutes.

Roger Boxill writes that Williams's father "enjoyed the life of a Mississippi drummer – the travelling, the all-night poker games, the 'light ladies'" (6). Without much variation, Tennessee Williams's authorized biographer, the late Lyle Leverich,[15] reports that,

> [a]fter two years spent studying law at the University of Tennessee [. . .], Cornelius joined the army at the outbreak of war with Spain and emerged with a passion for the itinerant life: hard drink, loose women, and all-night poker games. (29)

Tennessee and his younger brother, Dakin, were well aware of their father's escapades with prostitutes. In fact, there is a telling passage in Donald Spoto's *The Kindness of Strangers: The Life of Tennessee Williams*, where Dakin recalls a troubling incident involving his father and a whore: "There had been a sex party of some kind among some employees of International Shoe," Dakin continued, "and my father and another employee had contracted gonorrhoea from a prostitute" (19). Dakin appears to look kindly upon his father's infidelities, defending the paterfamilias:

> He got no sex from Mother, so he was not averse to picking up a discreet female companion whenever the opportunity beckoned—but did not go around 'chasing'. Actually he had a very big nature and didn't hold grudges or resentments for very long—his only bad habit was excessive drinking. (qtd. in Leverich 133)

In his *Memoirs*, Williams succinctly addresses his father's lifestyle and its impact on the family:

> After a short career in the telephone business, he became a shoe salesman and was very popular and successful at this itinerant profession, during which he acquired a great taste for poker and for light ladies—which was another source of distress to my mother. (13)

These recollections of growing up with Cornelius and Edwina would eventually serve as source material for his work.

Hale's article, "Of Prostitutes, Artists and Ears," mentions an unfinished play by Williams, *The Holy Family*, which strongly reflects on his family life:

> Already writing double characters, Tom saw himself as the maniac-artist and perhaps the 'bastard,' rejected by his father. His mother was always the Madonna, but also—since in his mind she had prostituted herself by marrying Cornelius—the whore. (37)

Williams's association of marriage with prostitution will be discussed in greater detail in chapter four. How much Cornelius's participation in the prostitution trade affected Williams during his early years is unclear. What is certain, however, is that the playwright was significantly worried throughout his adult life about his own involvement (figurative and literal) in prostitution—both as a practitioner of the "base trade" and as a buyer of sex (Lenz 833).

Williams had a lifelong preoccupation with the idea of selling out as an artist, in other words, prostituting his art. His fears of becoming a prostitute in the world of commercial theatre put him in great company, since such worries plagued a number of notable dramatists. Lenz explains the extent to which the old association of playwriting and prostitution bothered the first professional playwrights:

> Perhaps because they were youths of the best parentage playwrights were anxious about their chosen occupation. We are all familiar with the famous example of Jonson and the loathed stage. But Jonson was not alone. At one point or another, Greene, Marston, Dekker, Chapman, and others all expressed their ambivalence, if not their outright disdain, for the occupation that provided (more or less) their livelihoods. In fact, the more playwrighting became an occupation, and a particular kind of occupation, the more distress it caused the playwrights.

> Jonson's loathing of the stage is rooted, as Jonas Barish has described, partly in the perception of the stage as a place of popular performance, that is, as spectacle, and partly in Jonson's neo-classical suspicion of the degree to which visual presentation and interpretation corrupts, a suspicion he shared, as we have seen, with a host of Puritan anti-theatrical critics. As Jonson sensed, the measure to which he succeeded in providing popular pleasure for money was precisely the measure by which he failed to gain social and literary respectability, honor, and esteem, what Laura Stevenson refers to as "the problem of the interrelationship between money and status." (842)

Leverich underscores the fact that, like Williams, anyone wishing to make it on the "Great White Way" had to deal with, to borrow Laura Stevenson's expression, "the problem of the interrelationship between money and status" (qtd. in Lenz 842):

> There was no Off- or Off-Off-Broadway theatre to provide the playwright with an experimental stage, nor were there regional theatres that presented new plays, with their sights carefully set on a move to New York. In 1939, Broadway was *the* theatre and for the playwright, it was a mecca. As a result, there could be no success other than a commercial success. Achieving anything less than that was to take up residence in oblivion. In those times, a playwright who did not consider the commercial possibilities of whatever he wrote would be considered a ludicrous eccentric. Tom's schooling at Iowa and his alliance with Holland [an early mentor of Williams surnamed Willard] had taught him the need to write for the theatre that *exists*, and Tennessee was never anything less than a commercially oriented playwright, much as he deplored and increasingly resisted it. (326-327)

Consequently, aspiring playwrights could not indulge in the *naiveté* of creating art for art's sake.

Nancy M. Tischler describes the kind of dilemma facing an artist like Williams:

> In a real sense, Tennessee Williams is right about his dread. The choices open to the modern artist are terrifying for the sensitive man to contemplate. In a world coldly indifferent or harshly antagonistic to his values, he finds himself constantly fighting the stream of life. Insisting on inner realities, the timeless value of beauty and truth, he is lured by the sirens of fame and wealth. He has a choice of integrity at the risk of poverty and obscurity, or "prostituting his art" for emotional or material security. The attempt to satisfy both the world and himself is the poet's agony. (*Rebellious Puritan* 302-303)

Tischler argues that Williams's words following the disastrous reception of his play, *Battle of Angels*, in Boston on 30 December 1940, "I thought for a while I was washed up even before I'd got started" (*Rebellious Puritan* 86), speak to his genuine artistic goal to achieve literary respectability.[16] From Williams's dramatic, if not hubristic, reaction to his theatrical failure, Tischler concludes:

> There is an integrity of a perverse sort in this statement, a determination that he and his play were right, that he could not "prostitute" either of them for public acclaim. If anyone changed, it must be the public. (*Rebellious Puritan* 86)

Boxill discusses how the war years were extremely difficult for Williams, who, during this period, worked numerous odd jobs to make ends meet (14-15).

In his *Memoirs*, Williams talks about a completely serendipitous moment in 1939 when he won a hundred dollars for a collection of short plays that he had submitted in a contest. He explains the importance of the surprising award:

> But at that time it was not only a big slice of bread but it was a huge piece of encouragement and boost of morale and, even in those days, encouragement in my "sullen craft and art" was far more important to me than anything convertible into cash. (5)

The spoils of victory would only temporarily assuage the financial stress with which he was living.

In a letter dated 20 July 1942 to his friend Donald Windham, Williams, somewhat facetiously, laments his desperate struggle to survive financially: "There is no trick too low for my present nature. Or yours, I hope. – Kid him along about his genius and our sufferings. Both of us starving, selling our souls and trying to sell our asses" (qtd. in Windham 35). The playwright would not have to starve for too long. Indeed, within a couple of years, Williams would strike gold on Broadway with a streak of commercially successful and critically acclaimed plays, beginning with *The Glass Menagerie* in 1944 and ending with *The Night of the Iguana* in 1961, that is still unparalleled in the annals of American theatre. The period coincides with Joseph R. McCarthy's reign of terror, a dark period in American history when Hollywood studios and Broadway theatres followed rigid codes preventing the discussion or depiction of sexuality, when Communists and Communist sympathizers were blacklisted, and when gays and lesbians were pinklisted (Savran 82-86; Palmer, "Hollywood in Crisis," 208-212).

In *Congressional Theatre: Dramatizing McCarthyism on Stage, Film, and Television*, Brenda Murphy addresses this restrictive era:

> Not surprisingly, the New York theatre retreated from dramatizing overt political and social questions between 1945 and 1960, creating instead what Arthur Miller has called "an era of gauze" in the intensely personal and psychological plays of Tennessee Williams, William Inge, Carson McCullers, Robert Anderson, and others. In this most pervasively and oppressively ideological of times, the American theatre has seemed to critics and historians to have ignored the fundamental political issues that were dividing the country. (2)

In total disagreement with Murphy's view, Savran declares that Williams's brand of theatre—which Williams regarded as "a new, plastic theatre" (7) in the production notes of *The Glass Menagerie* and later referred to as "the sculptural drama" (qtd. in Leverich 446)—not only reflected but also subverted the repressiveness of the 1940s and 1950s in America:

> Here was a writer who called himself a revolutionary and meant it, a playwright who produced a new and radical theater that challenged and undermined the Cold War order. (ix)[17]

As a matter of fact, Williams's rise to national prominence could not have happened at a more fortuitous time.

In *Love and Death in the American Novel*, Leslie A. Fiedler points out that a cultural *détente* occurred post-1945, which allowed for new (read: marginalized) voices to express themselves:

> [B]ut for perhaps ten years after World War II, the work of such fictionists as Capote and Carson McCullers profited by a *détente* in the middleclass, middlebrow war against homosexuality, just as the work of certain Jewish writers benefited by a similar relaxation on the anti-Semitic front. . . . [C]ertain writers, who

> only a generation or two ago would have had to produce semi-pornographic or encrypted books, have been able to make their ostensible subject what has so long been disguised or evaded in our classic fiction. (477)

Williams tapped into the political and the cultural zeitgeist with his frank treatment of sexuality, which linked him to another important and controversial post-WWII figure: Alfred C. Kinsey. In volume 2 of *The Selected Letters of Tennessee Williams, 1945-1957*, co-editors Albert J. Devlin and Tischler underscore this connection:

> The premiere of *Streetcar* in December 1947 and the publication of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (a collaboration of Kinsey and his staff) in the following month formed an intense focus of public sexual candor, and furor as well. (286)[18]

Remarkably, William Kleb's 1993 article, "Marginalia: *Streetcar*, Williams, and Foucault," ties in Kinsey's sex-behavior work with Williams's literary output. Kleb insists that Williams's *oeuvre* constitutes, "a kind of imaginative prefiguration of Foucault's theory" (27). Much like Williams's sex-filled plays and short stories, Kinsey's sex studies addressed sensitive subject matter that shocked mid-twentieth-century America.

Kinsey biographer James H. Jones contends the following:

> The immediate impact of Kinsey's work was to heat up cultural wars of long standing. In the months and years following its release, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* precipitated the most intense and high-level dialogue on human sexuality in the nation's history. Prior to Kinsey, Americans had debated a variety of sex-related issues, including prostitution, venereal disease, birth control, sex education, and Freud's theories. But the cultural debate that greeted *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* was far more important. It swept away the last remnants of

> the taboos that had inhibited Americans from engaging in public discourse about their erotic lives. In boardrooms, in barbershops, in cafés, in grocery stores, and on street corners Americans could be heard reciting his findings on the incidence of masturbation, homosexuality, premarital and extramarital intercourse, and the like. And wherever this happened, these and other topics became fair game for polite conversation. However awkward, prurient, or naughty they might feel, Americans suddenly had permission to talk about sex. Kinsey gave them that right, and he did so in the name of science. (574)

One can easily argue that Williams also gave his compatriots such freedom to open up about issues related to sexuality. While the sex researcher "compiled a careful inventory of garden-variety sexual code breakers" (Jones xiii), the American playwright depicted sexual outlaws (among them male and female prostitutes) in his dramas on the Broadway stage and later in off-Broadway venues. Williams's sensationalistic subject matter profoundly displeased critics, who would accuse Williams of prostituting his art for material gain.

Such criticism exacerbated Williams's deep-seated guilt about squandering the potential of his art for financial success. As Thomas P. Adler points out in *"A Streetcar Named Desire": The Moth and the Lantern*, an accusation of artistic prostitution was levelled at the playwright by "Mary McCarthy, who railed against Williams for capitalizing on 'the whole classic paraphernalia of insult and injury' in the search for box-office success" (12). In *Palimpsest: A Memoir*, Gore Vidal defends Williams, a lifelong friend, from the preceding criticism from the famous New York intellectual:

> Some things are simply not done. Success on Broadway was one of those things, and Mary McCarthy, in a fit of savage envy, the

> dark side to that otherwise bright intelligent nature, gave the game away when she wrote an attack on Tennessee in *Partisan Review* and called it, unconscious of what she was revealing about herself, "A Streetcar Named Success." (265)

Saddik offers this cogent commentary on Williams's critical reception:

> The estimations of Williams' early work by the critics were more ambivalent than those by the reviewers, as they expressed the opinion that Williams' work was *almost* great, but not quite. The critics tended to praise Williams as a dramatist during the early years of his career, but with qualifications. They never shared the pure enthusiasm for Williams' work that the reviewers had, and from the beginning of his career saw Williams as mainly a commercial playwright rather than a serious writer of enduring literature. (*The Politics of Reputation* 29)

Echoing McCarthy's earlier sentiment, Signi L. Falk draws attention to, "his [Williams's] shrewd sense for supplying what the public wants," (28), but she mitigates her critique by adding that his motivation was due "partly to the high-pressured commercialism of the contemporary theater" (28). Moreover, Falk explains that, "[f]or that trade [the Broadway market] he turned with considerable finesse to 'arty' motifs and theatrical tricks" (31). By using slang terms like "trade" and "tricks" that belong to the language of prostitution, Falk seems to imply that, as a playwright, Williams is essentially turning tricks.[19]

Along the same lines, Ronald Hayman makes the following assessment of Williams's prolific period:

> Between his early thirties and his early forties, Tennessee had enjoyed more success than any other playwright in the history of the American theater, but he saw himself as a failure. In his own judgment he had prostituted himself artistically, compromising

> his integrity by changing his texts to ingratiate himself with Kazan or increase the chances of Broadway success. (164)

Hayman's quote speaks directly to Marian Price's argument that, "in choosing to alter *Cat* in pursuit of success, Williams in effect turned away from his philosophical bent" (330). Elia Kazan's words about Williams in his autobiography, *Elia Kazan: A Life*, support Price's view: "It was Tennessee who wanted the commercial success, and he wanted it passionately" (544). In his introduction to the 2004 New Directions edition of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Edward Albee talks about the push and pull between Williams and Kazan, defending the former and criticizing the latter's self-serving nature:

> Most of Kazan's ideas were good ones—made the play more structurally sound and dramatically "forward moving." Some—the ones Williams rejected ultimately—were a little "commercial," an attempt to make the play. . .well, more commercial. Kazan could be as crass as the next man and he was always as interested in his own career as he was in anyone else's. (8-9)

Clum addresses the thorny issue of art versus commerce.

In the preface to *Acting Gay*, Clum presents an argument in which he defends Williams against those who charge him of manipulating the public for profit. Clum expounds:

> The other type of gay drama is the pre-Stonewall play written for the mainstream theater by a homosexual playwright. Such a work may seem to capitulate to the prejudices of its audience but actually reflects the internalized homophobia of the playwright. The reticence and heterosexism seen in such "closet dramas" as those by playwrights like William Inge and Tennessee Williams are not cynical, hypocritical ploys for commercial success but

> expressions of the playwrights' negative feelings about their own homosexuality. (xiii)

Price argues that *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* stands as testimony to Williams's unwillingness to take financial and emotional risks:

> In their [Maggie and Brick's] evolution from their first appearance in a short story through the original and Broadway versions of the play, Tennessee Williams has symbolically worked through a turning point in his own life as an artist – namely, the point at which he could choose either to shape his play according to his and others' ideas of a big hit, or to become paralyzed as a writer by the weight of forbidden truths that he lacked courage to bring to light in his art. In this psychobiographical reading, Skipper stands for the suppressed truths, Brick is the artist immobilized by guilt, and Maggie represents the impulse toward artistic survival at any cost. (324)

Wanting to attract a large audience, Williams chose not only to make artistic compromises but also to burn up his soul through concealment.

In an introduction to *A Streetcar Named Desire* (which was first published in *The New York Times* on 30 November 1947), Williams discusses the deleterious effects of success—"the Bitch Goddess"—on one's artistry:

> You know, then, that the public Somebody you are when you "have a name" is a fiction created with mirrors and that the only somebody worth being is the solitary and unseen you that existed from your first breath and which is the sum of your actions and so is constantly in a state of becoming under your own volition — and knowing these things, you can even survive the catastrophe of Success! It is never altogether too late, unless you embrace the Bitch Goddess, as William James called her, with both arms and find in her smothering caresses exactly what the homesick little boy in you always wanted, absolute protection and utter effortlessness. Security is a kind of death, I think, and it can come to you in a storm of royalty checks beside a kidney-shaped pool in Beverly Hills or anywhere at all that is removed from the conditions that made you an artist, if that's

> what you are or were or intended to be. (qtd. in *Notebooks* 226n387)

Kazan reveals how financial security changed his frequent collaborator in the theatre and the film industry:

> I was to watch with an awful pain how lost Tennessee Williams was as he shuttled around the bright spots of the world. The money his great success brought him allowed him to live in a way that squashed his talent. (273)[20]

Williams's Midas touch in the world of theatre naturally drew the attention of Hollywood producers, who believed his plays were desirable properties.

Williams heeded the siren call of Hollywood, but he realized that success in the film industry was tantamount to prostitution:

> I always felt like a whore there [Los Angeles]. I don't appreciate works of art being referred to as a "property," like a play of mine was a piece of undeveloped land in the Hollywood Hills. It is a city where everyone and everything is assumed to be up for sale. Everyone is thought to have a price. Well, some things cannot be priced! (Rader 219-220)

Contrary to the previous sentiment, Williams confesses, in the foreword to his *Memoirs*, that his life story could, actually, be priced:

> I want to admit to you that I undertook this memoir for mercenary reasons. It is actually the first piece of work, in the line of writing, that I have undertaken for material profit. But I want to tell you, too, that soon as I started upon the work I forgot the financial angle and became more and more pleasurably involved in this new form, undisguised self-revelation. (xviii)

His claim of never having written exclusively for money before *Memoirs* is dubious, especially in light of his opinion of his play, *Period of Adjustment*.

Spoto reports that,

> in a letter to Cheryl Crawford, he [Williams] wrote that it was not his best work by any standard, but that it was an honest appraisal of how he saw intimate relations; he added that his motive was to earn money for Rose's care. (228)

Such compromising unsettled Williams, and it fuelled his nomadic lifestyle.

Kazan addresses his friend's need for flight:

> Already world famous in 1953, Tennessee lived like a fugitive from justice, always changing his whereabouts, ever moving. He traveled along an archipelago of culture islands that were congenial to him, places where he might feel, for a time, at liberty to be unobserved and totally himself. (494)

Devlin and Tischler confirm that, for Williams, "escape was intended to refresh the imagination and to keep the threat of being 'peddled' at bay" (*Selected Letters* xi). Their collection includes letters in which the playwright not only states, "I felt like a discredited old conjurer whose bag of tricks was exhausted" (*Selected Letters* 258) but also expresses an overwhelming desire to

> shut a door on all that dreary buy and sell side of writing and work purely again for myself alone. I am sick of being peddled. Perhaps if I could have escaped being peddled I might have become a major artist. (*Selected Letters* 519)

Williams became a persona non grata on Broadway post-1961, a period when he tried to engage theatregoers with non-realistic, experimental, and absurdist plays.

In her study of the critical reception of Williams's late work, Saddik concludes that,

> [t]he critics were never prepared to take Williams seriously. From the beginning of his career they looked upon him as the pop hero of Broadway, and they were not about to budge from that position long enough to form a careful evaluation of his later work. (*The Politics of Reputation* 149)

In his *Memoirs*, Williams reflects upon the brutal nature of his chosen profession, one that initially celebrated him and then completely rejected him: "I know that these are the cruel exigencies of life in the theatre: there is little or no sentiment to be encountered in its machinations. It is a mirror of nature. The individual is ruthlessly discarded for the old, old consideration of profit" (214-215).[21] Even during his prolific period, Williams was always aware of the precarious nature of his reign as America's foremost dramatist: "Baby, the playwright's working career is a short one. There's always somebody new to take your place" (qtd. in Vidal 154). If Williams was obsessed with artistic prostitution in his professional life, he was equally obsessed with physical prostitution in his personal life.

One could argue that, as with alcoholism, the "sins" of the father [patronizing prostitutes] were visited on the son; Cornelius had a taste for "light ladies" (Boxill 6), whereas Tennessee had an appetite for male "side dishes" (Rader 18). Impressed by Williams's representation of a prostitute in *Fugitive Kind*, Hale describes Williams's first real-life exposure to prostitution:

> Bertha, the prostitute, is amazingly well-drawn by a writer who had never encountered her type except in imagination. The nearest Tom got to such an experience was when he and a friend ventured to East St. Louis to investigate the notorious red light district, but with no money to experiment, came on home. ("A Playwright to Watch" xvi)

Cultural iconoclast Camille Paglia reports another incident:

> Tennessee Williams told Elizabeth Ashley about being taken to a brothel for his "initiation into manhood." A prostitute forced him to look between her legs: "'All I could see was somethin' that looked like a dyin' orchid. Consequently I have never been comfortable either with orchids or women.'" (*Sexual Personae* 434)

From 1935 to 1940, the young Williams actually worked with the theatre group, "The Mummers," a motley crew that included some "whores and tramps" (Tischler, *Rebellious Puritan*, 48).

While he barely encountered prostitutes in St. Louis, he was frequently surrounded by them while living in New Orleans and traveling the world. In his introduction to the 2006 edition of Williams's *Memoirs*, John Waters relates that Williams "never took the upperclass that seriously. He hung around with street queens in New Orleans, prostitutes in Key West, and later in life, Warhol superstar Candy (the name of the cross-dresser in *And Tell Sad Stories of the Deaths of Queens*) Darling became a best friend" (xiii). Hayman reports that in Mexico City,

> Tennessee was accosted on the street by some of the male whores and taken to the house of Juanita, their queen, where he was entertained, though he spoke no Spanish and they spoke no English. Their price was only two pesos—about forty cents—and one of them was so attractive that a kiss and an embrace from him was enough to give Tennessee an orgasm. (70)

However, it is the city of Rome that inflamed Williams's passion for prostitution:

> A cynical old American journalist whom I met soon after my arrival said to me, "Rome is a city of thieves, mendicants, and prostitutes, both male and female." The prevalence of prostitution was undeniable and not to the disadvantage of the cynical journalist who shared my sexual interests but was considerably more callous in his indulgence of that taste. . . . As for prostitution, that is really the world's oldest profession in all Mediterranean countries with the possible exception of Spain. It is due largely to their physical beauty and to their warmth of blood, their natural eroticism. In Rome you rarely see a young man who does not have a slight erection. Often they walk along the Veneto with hand in pocket, caressing their genitals quite unconsciously, and this regardless of whether or not they are hustling or cruising. They are raised without any of our puritanical reserves about sex. Young American males, even when they are good-looking, do not think of themselves as sexually desirable. Good-looking young Italians never think of themselves as anything else. And they are rarely mistaken. (*Memoirs* 141)

Of course, as Spoto points out, Williams took advantage of the Roman scene to satisfy his sexual appetite:

> Williams, for one, wrote letter after letter to Donald Windham boasting of what he admitted was an excess of sensuality. Part of this was because a little money went a long way, and Roman boys and young men would, for the price of a meal or a coat, be available. (146)[22]

This availability can be explained by the fact that, according to Vidal, "Italian 'trade' has never had much interest in the character, aspirations, or desires of those to whom they rent their ass" (152). Williams's constant exposure to, and indulgence in, prostitution in the Italian capital would serve as the inspiration for his first novel, *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*, published in 1950.

Spoto observes that, "[t]he prevalent motif of the novel (which has a tripartite dramatic form) is artistic and sexual prostitution, and it is an amalgam of prostitutions that spells the final doom of the hard-hearted Mrs. Stone" (167). Hayman agrees with Spoto:

> The central question is about the wrongness of buying sexual pleasure. But as in so many of Williams's fictions, the theme of buying sexual favors is dovetailed with the theme of aging, and Karen is presented as primarily a victim of the aging process. (129)

Tischler concurs as well with Hayman's assessment. She explains that the novel "is a study of the human tragedy of age without fulfillment, and of the contrast of the barren materialist American outlook with the vital Roman outlook" (*Rebellious Puritan* 177). Regarding the conflicted Mrs. Stone, Hayman also writes that, "[i]t was easy for Tennessee to empathize with an aging woman who has doubts about the quality of her talent and cannot resist 'pretty young boys of the pimp or gigolo class'" (129). That prostitution played a major role in Williams's personal and professional life is further corroborated by Rader:

> Tennessee had a lifelong fascination with prostitutes, and never did understand why bringing a hooker to a fancy dinner party wasn't good form. He enjoyed listening to their life stories. From them he got a good deal of vicarious experience that went into his short stories and plays. He *felt* for them, and championed their right to be just as they were. But then, he viewed American society as an unjust and unequal arrangement that compelled most people to be whores of one form or another, selling their virtue to the rich. In short, prostitution was a metaphor for the American system. (18-19)[23]

Williams's penchant for "trade" and his dependence on paid companions took on a greater importance late in his life, as Spoto reports:

> The circle of attractive young men ever in attendance now more than ever, and more boldly than ever, sought the glamour of association, some too willing to exchange sexual for professional favors, and a number who simply filled idle hours drinking his liquor and draining his energies. They had manuscripts for him to read, stories for him to hear. If they were at all talented, he listened and supported and helped them financially. If they were at all attractive to him, they were guaranteed even more attention. (329)

He restates the case later on in his book:

> A number of those in Williams's social entourage — several of whom tried to remain as 'personal assistants' — were interested only in the social and sexual contacts that can always be made through a celebrity; and several were all too willing to offer themselves in the hope of some sort of compensation. (340)

More bluntly, Spoto adds that, "Williams was surrounded by a pack of glamour-hungry jackals who used sex like a fly-swatter" (333). With noticeable frustration, Vidal recalls Williams's entourage: "Certainly, I never got on with the remittance queens for whom Tennessee was a magnet, which meant that if one saw him, one saw them" (177). Williams's descriptions of his sexual transactions in his *Memoirs* and his journals underscore the fact that the writer occasionally experienced bouts of post-coital depression.

The following letter, dated 2 July 1955, confirms such a sinking feeling following a sexual transaction:

> The most embarassing [sic] of all relations is with a whore. At least, after the act, when you suffer the post-orgasmic withdrawal anyway. [sic] a good whore, in the sense of a really

> wise one, knows how to create an atmosphere that obviates this hazard but the one this afternoon, though divinely gifted in the practise of bed, made me feel very sheepish afterwards. I didn't know how to offer the money or how to say goodbye. It is because of my Puritanical feeling that that it is wrong, *wrong*! – to use another being's body like this because of having need, on one hand, and cash on the other – Still — I owe more pleasure to this circumstance in life than anything else, I guess. Can I complain? Breast beating is twice as false as the love of any whore. (*Notebooks* 677)

Besides the moral anguish he experiences after paid sex, Williams complains about the physical and emotional dangers of dealing with prostitutes:

> There's nothing emptier, nothing more embarrassing than a street-corner pickup. Usually you get crabs and you're lucky if you don't get the clap and each time a little bit of your heart is chipped off and thrown into a gutter. (*Memoirs* 227)

In spite of his feelings of emptiness and embarrassment, Williams continued to pay for sex throughout his life.

In conclusion, Williams wrote a letter to Justin Brooks Atkinson on 3 April 1953 in which he stated the following:

> I have lived intimately with the outcast and derelect [sic] and the desperate and found in them the longing, passionate, and bravely enduring, and most of all, the tender. I have tried to make a record of their lives because my own has fitted me to do so. And I feel that each artist is sort of bound by honor to be the voice of that part of the world that he knows. (*Selected Letters* 469-470)

By staging the lives of prostitutes and other (sexual) outcasts, he became, according to American biographer, Foster Hirsch, "our national poet of the perverse" (3). The details about Williams's lifelong fear of prostituting his art and his fascination with prostitution are, indeed, illuminating, but I am mindful

of Jacqueline O'Connor's proviso about the tendency of critics to overly favor a biographical approach to study Williams's work:

> Although biographical interpretation is but one of a variety of approaches, it has too often dominated the critical methods applied to Williams; this has resulted in a restriction of insight, rather than the expansion we rightly expect from literary interpretation. (*Dramatizing Dementia*, 30-31)

In his *Memoirs*, Williams makes the following comment regarding biographical interpretation:

> I think it is only in the case of Brecht that a man's politics, if the man is an artist, are of particular importance in his work; his degrees of talent and humanity are what count. I also feel that an artist's sexual predilections or deviations are not usually pertinent to the value of his work. Of interest, certainly. (142).

I am not overly interested in traditional biographical criticism or in post-modern approaches to literary biography.[24] I have simply used (auto-) biographical information about Williams's artistic and sexual prostitutions as a "side dish." The next chapter will provide the main course: a detailed discussion of the buyers and sellers of sex in Williams's work.

Chapter Two:

“there’s just two kinds of people, the ones that are bought and the buyers!”:

Williams’s Representation of the Prostitute-Client Relationship

> VAL. I'm telling you, Lady, there's people bought and sold in this world like carcasses of hogs in butcher shops!
> LADY. You ain't tellin' me nothin' I don't know.
> VAL. You might think there's many and many kinds of people in this world but, Lady, there's just two kinds of people, the ones that are bought and the buyers! No!—there's one other kind . . .
> LADY. What kind's that?
> VAL. The kind that's never been branded. (265)
>
> -Tennessee Williams, *Orpheus Descending*

> "You know what it is: that I am one of those *aging*—*voluptuaries*—who used to be paid for pleasure but now have to pay!" (496)
>
> -Marguerite Gautier, *Camino Real*

The main setting in Williams's short story, "The Mysteries of the Joy Rio," written in 1941 and published in 1954, is a former opera house turned cheap cinema in which occur "fleeting and furtive practices in dark places" (*Collected Stories* 106).[25] The story centers around Pablo Gonzales, who, in the tradition of his deceased protector, Emile Kroger, engages in money-for-sex transactions "in the many recesses of the Joy Rio" (*CS* 106). Williams gives this description of the establishment:

> The old opera house was a miniature of all the great opera houses of the old world, which is to say its interior was faded gilt and incredibly old and abused red damask which extended upwards through at least three tiers and possibly five. The upper stairs, that is, the stairs beyond the first gallery, were roped off and unlighted and the top of the theater was so peculiarly dusky, even with the silver screen flickering far below it, that Mr. Gonzales, used as he was to close work, could not have made it out from below. (*CS* 105-106)

As the former protégé of Mr. Kroger, Pablo has been well instructed in the art of cruising the upper galleries of the cinema to satisfy his sexual needs.

Undoubtedly, the forbidden regions of the Joy Rio, as those of the theatres mentioned in the previous chapter, provide choice opportunities for such carnal consummation:

> Now across the great marble stairs, that rose above the first gallery of the Joy Rio to the uncertain number of galleries above it, there had been fastened a greasy and rotting length of old velvet rope at the center of which was hung a sign that said to *Keep Out*. But that rope had not always been there. It had been there about twenty years, but the late Mr. Kroger had known the Joy Rio in the days before the flight of stairs was roped off. In those days the mysterious upper galleries of the Joy Rio had been a sort of fiddler's green where practically every device and fashion of carnality had run riot in a gloom so thick that a chance partner could only be discovered by touch. (*CS* 107)

In *Communists, Cowboys, and Queers: The Politics of Masculinity in the Work of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams*, Savran explains the importance of this particular Williams text:

> Although written at the very beginning of his career as a playwright, this description of the Joy Rio and the activities that take place therein provides an astonishly apt and prescient metaphor for Tennessee Williams's project as a playwright: recolonizing an old-fashioned theater and turning it into an enigmatic, if slightly queer, site of resistance. (77-78)

Famous for constantly rewriting his work, Williams would return to the mysterious goings on at the Joy Rio in his short story, "Hard Candy," begun in 1949, finished four years later, and published in the titular collection in 1954.[26]

The main difference between "The Mysteries of the Joy Rio" and "Hard Candy" is that the former is romantic and elegiac, whereas the latter is darker and rife with black humor. The earlier story does not graphically depict money-for-sex transactions *per se*, but it coyly implies such dealings:

> But the reformation of the Joy Rio was somewhat less than absolute. It had reformed only to the point of ostensible virtue, and in the back rows of the first gallery at certain hours in the afternoon and very late at night were things going on of the sort Mr. Gonzales sometimes looked for. At those hours the Joy Rio contained few patrons, and since the seats in the orchestra were in far better condition, those who had come to sit comfortably watching the picture would naturally remain downstairs; the few that elected to sit in the nearly deserted rows of the first gallery did so either because smoking was permitted in that section—or *because* . . . . (*CS* 108)

It also concludes on a nostalgic note for the main character, whose sexual indulgences in the Joy Rio serve as a form of communion with his deceased lover. Conversely, the later story features an unambiguous description of a sexual transaction which ends with the death of its protagonist, the buyer of sex.

In "Hard Candy," Mr. Krupper (instead of Pablo Gonzales) patronizes the Joy Rio, "where the mysteries of his nature are to be made unpleasantly manifest to us" (*CS* 358). Williams uses the following lines to underscore the building's illustrious past: "For the Joy Rio is not, by any means, an ordinary theater. It is the ghost of a once elegant house where plays and operas were performed long ago" (*CS* 359). A shadow of its former self, the dilapidated Joy Rio now serves as a site for theatrics of a different nature in the form of discrete sexual transactions.

The story paints a vivid picture of Mr. Krupper's site of predilection for sex, where he induces young men to satisfy his urges in exchange for candy and money:

> Mr. Krupper is about to fly once more into panic, but then, at the very moment when his hand is about to withdraw from contact with the hand of the youth, that hand turns about, revolves to bring the palm upward. The coins descend, softly, with a slight tinkle, and Mr. Krupper knows that the contract is sealed between them. (*CS* 364)

The representation of prostitution in a former theatre is the most striking common denominator between both Williams texts. These two stories serve as stepping stones to the discussion of the first category of prostitutes in Williams's *oeuvre*: child prostitutes.

Though the ages of the young men who sell themselves to older men in the Joy Rio are not explicitly mentioned, it is safe to assume that some of them were indeed underage. In his short story, "One Arm," Williams is more specific about the ages of the depicted prostitutes:

> In New Orleans in the winter of '39 there were three male hustlers usually to be found hanging out on a certain corner of Canal Street [. . .]. Two of them were just kids of about seventeen and worth only passing attention, but the oldest of the three was an unforgettable youth. (*CS* 184)

Similarly, the juvenile delinquent, Clove, in "The Killer Chicken and the Closet Queen," is a sixteen-year-old who was "jailed for lewd vagrancy, peddling his goodies" (*CS* 588).

Adolescents of both genders are featured in Williams's outrageous play, *Kirche, Küche, Kinder*, in which the two libidinous children of a retired hustler are instructed in the paterfamilias's trade. The father offers the following advice to his teenage son:

> Heed only your Papa, the pro in your new profession. Head uptown, if ye know downtown from up. This world is geographic, and monetarily so. So. Get out of SoHo. Proceed with all possible haste to the public rooms of posh hotels overlooking the Central Park of Manhattan from the South or East side only. But into the park, wander not. Gang bangs in the bushes would reduce your price and prestige, not to mention. . . . (129)

Similarly, he tells his adolescent daughter to go uptown by bus in order establish a connection with an older customer:

> When you retire to the gentleman's uptown quarters, do not dispense your favors until he has produced and dispensed to you a bill that corresponds in every detail exactly to this one called the century note. (131)

When his children's venture into the world of prostitution turns out to be an exercise in futility, the father decides to come out of retirement and work once again as a hustler (144-147).

Besides the aforementioned works, Williams uses the expression "young men" in numerous texts, such as *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*, and *Camino Real*. Consequently, it is difficult to ascertain whether or not the prostitutes featured in these works are actually minors. What is clear, however, is that a few Williams texts deal in varying degrees with child prostitution. Two

dastardly examples of children's involvement in the world's oldest profession are mentioned in *Suddenly Last Summer* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.

In the first play, Catharine Holly recalls how casually her cousin Sebastian Venable handled, "[t]he homeless, hungry young people that had climbed over the fence from the free beach that they lived on. He'd pass out tips among them as if they'd all—shined his shoes or called taxis for him. . . ." (413).[27] Upon further questioning, Catharine becomes more explicit in her testimony, giving a more precise account of the age group of the ravenous beggars of Cabeza de Lobo that Sebastian bought for sex:

> There were naked children along the beach, a band of frightfully thin and dark naked children that looked like a flock of plucked birds, and they would come darting up to the barbed wire fence as if blown there by the wind, the hot white wind from the sea, all crying out, "*Pan, pan, pan!*" (415)[28]

This example of child prostitution speaks to Savran's point about "the proximity between sexual intimacy and economic abjection" (105).

Characters in Williams's plays are punished for their sexual indiscretions; as a result, Sebastian's retribution comes at the hands of his molested victims. Sofer explains: "In the cannibalistic economy of Cabeza de Lobo, the children are by turns disposable commodities and vengeful consumers" (344). As a form of poetic justice, the vampiric Sebastian is partially eaten by the children. Hayman provides this biographical interpretation of the play's denouement:

> This was the most ferocious theatrical image Tennessee had yet found to express the guilt he felt at eating luxuriously in cities where the natives were starving, and at paying boys to make love when they were too poverty-stricken to say no. He writes as if his own predatory homosexuality had come to nauseate him. "Yes, we all use each other," says Catharine, "and that's what we think of as love." (174-175)

In her article focussing on *Suddenly Last Summer*, Saddik develops the following argument:

> The bond of identification between human beings in [*Suddenly Last Summer*] demands that one consumes while the other is consumed. Although this could be said of the portrayal of most attempts at human connection in Williams' works, it is only with homosexual males that the bond is presented as literally consuming, and this annihilation of the body serves as the retribution and atonement for the sin of transgressing the boundaries of desire established by social institutions. ("The (Un)Represented Fragmentation" 348)

In the second play, the subject of pedophilia is intimated when Big Daddy explains how he was able to rise above his station and achieve the American Dream:

> I quit school at ten years old and went to work like a nigger in the fields. And I rose to be overseer of the Straw and Ochello plantation. And old Straw died and I was Ochello's partner and the place got bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger! (77)

Surprisingly, as soon as he finishes talking about his strong work ethic, the patriarch starts a lengthy diatribe about child prostitution:

> And then in Morocco, them Arabs, why, prostitution begins at four or five, that's no exaggeration, why, I remember one day in Marrakech, that old walled Arab city, I set on a broken-down wall to have a cigar, it was fearful hot there and this Arab woman stood in the road and looked at me till I was embarrassed, she stood stock still in the dusty hot road and looked at me till I was embarrassed. But listen to this. She had a

> naked child with her, a little naked girl with her, barely able to toddle, and after a while she set this child on the ground and give her a push and whispered something to her. This child come toward me, barely able to t'walk, come toddling up to me and—Jesus, it makes you sick t' remember a thing like this! It stuck out its hand and tried to unbutton my trousers! That child was not yet five! Can you believe me? Or do you think that I am making this up? I wint back to the hotel and said to Big Mama, Git packed! We're clearing out of this country. . . . (87-88)

Big Daddy's bizarre segue leads one to think that his wealth may not have been accumulated solely through hard work. It may also be due to the travails of prostitution.

In *Out on Stage: Lesbian and Gay Theatre in the Twentieth Century*, Alan Sinfield states that,

> for Big Daddy—the unassailable patriarch who is both a pioneer and a successful businessman—the pioneering spirit has not been incompatible with queerness. 'I knocked around in my time [. . .]. Slept in hobo jungles and railroad Y's and flop houses in all cities . . . I seen all things and understood a lot of them.' (198)

Echoing Sinfield, Savran offers this explanation as to why Big Daddy, like seemingly every other sexual transgressor in Williams's work, must be punished:

> Structurally, Big Daddy functions as the carrier of homosexuality—the heir to the estate, engineered by "hook or crook," and the man who confesses to having "knocked around in his time" (pp. 61, 85). Big Daddy is paying a terrible price for his youthful prodigality (a price that would not be out of line in *The Immoralist*). He is dying of bowel cancer, which as in "The Mysteries of the Joy Rio," becomes the currency of mortal debt in Williams' homosexual economy. For Big Daddy, bowel cancer seems to be the wages of sodomy (or, at least, of "knocking around"). (100-101)

Noted gay critics, among them Clum and Sinfield, find several of Williams's works to be problematic because of their limited or negative depictions of gay characters on the one hand, and because of their conflation of sexual predation and homosexuality on the other.

Paller provides a cogent analogy that explains why one specific play in the Williams canon elicits such animosity:

> What is to be done with *Suddenly Last Summer*? For critics or directors interested in images of homosexuality, the play is what *The Merchant of Venice* is to Jewish critics of Shakespeare, or *The Taming of the Shrew* to feminist Shakespeareans. (145-146)

Instead of commending Williams for even discussing sexuality, let alone homosexuality, before the rise of the gay rights movement, dissenting voices (gay and straight) found fault with his work. Paller sums up the animus directed toward Williams by his detractors:

> What accounts for the malice with which critics treated Williams, who, if he had written nothing else, had given the world *The Glass Menagerie*, *Streetcar*, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*? I contend in chapters 5 and 6 that homophobia had more than a little to do with it. It was never a secret that Williams was gay, and from *Streetcar* on, some critics used this knowledge against him. They also used it against those characters who were gay, by either trivializing their importance or ignoring them altogether. One should not be surprised that straight critics writing between the 1940s and 1970s would behave this way, sometimes out of malice, more often from a simple lack of understanding or even vocabulary. What is stranger is that, in the 1990s, some gay critics took up where their straight predecessors left off. Since then, the problem has been that Tennessee Williams isn't gay *enough*; that he was incapable of producing a "positive image" of a gay person. (2)

Paller's quote is a thinly veiled rebuke of the malice expressed by critics, most notably John M. Clum.

In "'Something Cloudy, Something Clear': Homophobic Discourse in Tennessee Williams," Clum contends that Williams suffers from a split persona:

> Williams was privately open about his sexual orientation, but publicly cautious, as he was relatively willing to treat homosexuality directly in his nondramatic writings, which would reach a limited audience (he never until his later years strove for the money and publicity of a best-selling novel), but cautious in his dramas. His caution takes two forms. One is the clever use of what he calls "obscurity or indirection" to soften and blur the homosexual element of much of his work. The other is a complex acceptance of homophobic discourse, which he both critiques and embraces. This reliance on and occasional manipulation of the language of homophobia is the basis of Williams's treatment of the subject of homosexuality in his plays, reflecting a split he saw in his own nature. (164)

Bruhm rejects Clum's assessment:

> Like so much other Williams criticism then, Clum's stops at the emotional and psychological without extending them to the social and the political. It is my contention here that *Suddenly Last Summer* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, are, among other things, indictments of the social structures that regulate homosexual behaviour. ("Blackmailed by Sex" 537n13)

Along the lines of Clum, who has written extensively on the "homophobic discourse" found in several of Williams's texts, Sinfield maintains that, "*Suddenly Last Summer* is also Williams' most homophobic play. Sebastian's desire is presented as an uncontrollable appetite which leads ineluctably to his death from the cannibalistic attack of the street boys he has been courting"

(192). Moreover, the play has raised the ire of Nicholas de Jongh, who states in *Not in Front of the Audience* that, "*Suddenly Last Summer* is Williams's one play that resists liberation, or finds in liberation that depravity which the orthodox of the 1950s believed was synonymous with homosexuality" (82). The play also incurs the wrath of Nancy M. Tischler.

Reminiscent of Clum's point about Williams's split persona, Tischler renders a particularly harsh assessment of the play:

> But the real shock in *Suddenly Last Summer* is its reflection of neurosis. Obviously *Suddenly Last Summer* reflects the psychic imbalance the author experienced in this period. No other play by Tennessee Williams so directly calls for the adjective *sick*. (*Rebellious Puritan* 262)

Disgusted by the showcase titled, *Garden District*, a double bill of *Something Unspoken* and *Suddenly Last Summer*, critic Florence Conrad insists that "the deviant *need* not be the predatory" (qtd. in Sinfield 234). While it is true that Williams's work features predatory homosexual pedophiles like Sebastian, it also features heterosexual characters that have a sexual predilection for minors.

Like the adolescents in *Kirche, Küche, Kinder*, the thirteen-year-old girl, Willie, in *This Property is Condemned* follows in her deceased sister Alva's footsteps by entering into the family trade. In her interactions with a stranger, a teenage boy, Willie discusses the "adult" education she has received from her sister:

> WILLIE. What a girl needs to get along is social training. I learned all of that from my sister Alva. She had a wonderful popularity with the railroad men.
> TOM. Train engineers?
> WILLIE. Engineers, firemen, conductors. Even the freight sup'rintendent. We run a boardinghouse for railroad men. She was I guess you might say The Main Attraction. Beautiful? Jesus, she looked like a movie star! (251)

Since both of her parents have abandoned her, Willie survives in the deserted and condemned family home by submitting to her sister's former clients, who exploit her economically and sexually:

> WILLIE. I've also inherited all of my sister's beaux. Albert and Clemence and even the freight sup'rintendent.
> TOM. Yeah?
> WILLIE. They all disappeared. Afraid that they might get stuck for expenses I guess. But now they turn up again, all of 'em, like a bunch of bad pennies. They take me out places at night. I've got to be popular now. To parties an' dances an' all of the railroad affairs. (255)

The spectre of child molestation also rears its ugly head in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Early in the play, Blanche DuBois makes sexual overtures to the paper boy:

> Come here. I want to kiss you, just once, softly and sweetly on your mouth! [*Without waiting for him to accept, she crosses quickly to him and presses her lips to his*.] Now run along, now, quickly! It would be nice to keep you, but I've got to be good—and keep my hands off children. (339)

The full resonance of those lines are not obvious upon the first reading, that is, until later on in the play when her brother-in-law, Stanley Kowalski, reveals to his wife, Stella, the circumstances that led to Blanche's dismissal as a teacher:

"They kicked her out of that high school before the spring term ended—and I hate to tell you the reason that step was taken! A seventeen-year-old boy—she'd gotten mixed up with!" (362). Ultimately, Blanche confesses, explaining the chain of events that led her to interfere with a minor:

> Yes, I had many intimacies with strangers. After the death of Allan—intimacies with strangers was all I seemed able to fill my empty heart with. . . . I think it was panic, just panic, that drove me from one to another, hunting for some protection—here and there, in the most—unlikely places—even, at last, in a seventeen-year-old boy but—somebody wrote the superintendent about it—"This woman is morally unfit for her position!" [*She throws back her head with convulsive, sobbing laughter. Then she repeats the statement, gasps, and drinks*.] True? Yes, I suppose—unfit somehow—anyway. . . . (386-387)

Blanche's self-revelation ties in to Foucault's notion of confession since, as Kleb argues, "the structure of *Streetcar* can be seen as a series of confessions, some forced, others voluntary, in which the marginal figure (Blanche) is reclassified as an object of purely sexual knowledge" (29). Like Blanche, the avuncular Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon in *The Night of the Iguana* is deemed morally unfit by his parishioners.

Shannon is defrocked because he committed, as he succinctly puts it, "fornication and heresy . . . in the same week" (302).[29] Well aware of Shannon's predilection for young girls and realizing that charges for sexual interference with an underage girl, Charlotte Goodall, may be brought against him by Judith Fellowes, Maxine Faulk offers him judicious advice: "You know I'll help you, baby, but why don't you lay off the young ones and cultivate an

interest in normal grown-up women?" (264). A later conversation between Shannon and Maxine sheds light on the former reverend's past, suggesting that he is a recidivist much like Blanche:

> SHANNON. She's trying to get me fired and she is also trying to pin on me a rape charge, a charge of statutory rape.
> MAXINE. What's "statutory rape"? I've never known what that was.
> SHANNON. That's when a man is seduced by a girl under twenty. [*She chuckles*.] It's not funny, Maxine honey.
> MAXINE. Why do you want the young ones—or think that you do?
> SHANNON. I don't want any, any—regardless of age.
> MAXINE. Then why do you take them, Shannon. [*He swallows but does not answer.*]—Huh, Shannon.
> SHANNON. People need human contact, Maxine honey. (267-268)

At the end of the play, Shannon opens up about his life to Hannah Jelkes, and, in so doing, establishes "human contact" in a more appropriate and legal manner. Hannah shows him tremendous understanding and empathy, so much so that she eventually tells him that she was sexually molested by a stranger when she was a teenager:

> When I was sixteen, your favorite age, Mr. Shannon, [. . .] I'd sit at the almost empty back of the movie theatre so that the popcorn munching wouldn't disturb the other movie patrons. Well . . . one afternoon a young man sat beside me and pushed his . . . knee against mine and . . . I moved over two seats but he moved over beside me and continued this . . . pressure! I jumped up and screamed, Mr. Shannon. He was arrested for molesting a minor. (361)

The topic of statutory rape is equally broached in *Sweet Bird of Youth*.

In the play, Boss Finley insinuates that Chance committed statutory rape on his daughter, Heavenly: "My little girl was fifteen, barely out of her childhood when—" (56). However, an earlier discussion between Chance and Princess Kosmonopolis puts to rest the notion that Chance sexually interfered with a minor:

> CHANCE [*handing* PRINCESS *a snapshot*]. This is a flashlight photo I took of her, nude, one night on Diamond Key, which is a little sandbar about half a mile off shore which is under water at high tide. This was taken with the tide coming in. The water is just beginning to lap over her body like it desired her like I did and still do and will always, always. [CHANCE *takes back the snapshot*.] Heavenly was her name. You can see that it fits her. This was her at fifteen.
> PRINCESS. Did you have her that early?
> CHANCE. I was just two years older, we had each other that early. (50)

Though it is not applicable to *Sweet Bird of Youth*, statutory rape occurs in one of the play's earlier drafts titled, "Big Time Operators."

In his article, "Problems with Boss Finley," Brian Parker identifies the key players involved in the political and sexual drama:

> The chief characters are the Huey Long figure, Pere Polk (Polk is the name of a Louisiana parish); Boss Finley, the cynical organizer of his party "machine"; and a fifteen-year-old Mexican whore called Candy. (55)

Based on his scrutiny of the evolving material, Parker concludes that by "[h]aving no real understanding of (or, perhaps, interest in) Long's outrageous political maneuvering, Williams made the crux of Pere Polk's downfall his fatal passion for a juvenile hooker" (55). These numerous examples of heterosexuals

preying on children not only provide a counterpoint to the tired criticisms made by gay critics of Williams's negative portrayal of gay characters but also tamp down the claims that the writer unfairly links homosexuality with sexual predation. Sure, Sebastian and the men who inveigle children inside the Joy Rio are sexual predators; however, Blanche DuBois, Reverend Shannon, and Pere Polk also sexually engage with jailbait.

Paller explains that gay critics are also bothered by Williams's recurring representation of male hustlers, who constitute the second category of prostitutes in Williams's work (171). Clum comments on the recurring gigolo persona:

> The gigolo is the most fascinating case of reversal of the sex/gender system. The woman is in financial control and pays the financially dependent man to service her physically and emotionally. His looks and his sexual prowess are his most important assets. Williams, no stranger to hiring men for sex, used the related (sometimes identical) figures of the male hustler in a number of works. ("The Sacrificial Stud" 141)

Though several of the male prostitutes in Williams's work eschew facile categorization, they generally fall into three groups: 1) lowly streetwalkers; 2) masseurs and paid escorts; 3) travel companions and gay-for-pay hustlers.

For example, in Williams's *Now and at the Hour of Our Death*, two gay lovers named Dave and Jack work as hustlers and ply their trade in different locales, as "[o]ne hustles on the street, another out of an establishment called 'Mother Freddies'" (Paller 171). Jack is aware that he and his partner are

nothing but "a pair of human commodities" (30; qtd. in Paller 172). Paller addresses this point:

> Men had been commodities in Williams plays at least as early as *Talk to Me Like the Rain* written about 1950 (and produced on PBS in 1970); it will recur in *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* and in poems such as "The Blond Mediterraneans" in 1980. (173)

Among these commodities, one may include a number of minor Williams characters.

The beach boys in *The Night of the Iguana*, Pedro and Pancho, to whom Shannon refers as Maxine's "Mexicans concubines" (306), used to service women at the Quebrada Hotel before setting shop at the Costa Verde Hotel and providing the same sexual favors to their employer, the "*rapaciously lusty*" Maxine (255).[30] Moreover, Ahmed in *Camino Real* sells himself to Marguerite Gautier, a former prostitute who understands that her life has come full circle: "You know what it is: that I am one of those *aging—voluptuaries*—who used to be paid for pleasure but now have to pay!" (496). Further examples of male prostitutes are Paolo, Franco, and Roberto, nicknamed the "*marchette*" (52) in Williams's novel, *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*.[31] The principal hustler of the Italian trio is Paolo, a self-aware young man who lives by his cock:

> While he was being shaved and massaged, Paolo, who was quite tall for a Southern Italian, sat far down in the chair with his legs dropping wide apart and with one hand laid on the center of his being, which was groin. That hand laid there was like an electric wire plugged into a socket for the purpose of giving power and

> light to the invariable subject of discussion which was the sexual experience by which and for which the young Conte Paolo existed. The indolence and luxury and dream of this connection between the two young men had been in effect for almost a year, during which period Paolo had recited the serialized history of three consecutive 'protectors,' beginning with the Signora Coogan last summer and almost at the same time, the fabulously wealthy Jewish Baron Waldheim whom they called the Baroness and talked of exactly as if he were a woman [. . .] and, now, and for several months' duration, Mrs. Stone, from whom he expected to get a great deal more than from all the others put together, since she was the wealthiest of the lot and the only one whose interest in him appeared to be rooted in something deeper than concupiscence. (28)

Though Paolo's clients are predominantly female, he does service Baron Waldheim, which brings to mind the young hustler in *Camino Real*, Lobo, who seeks the protection of the Baron de Charlus (464).

In *Something Cloudy, Something Clear*, Clare suspects that a young adonis is trying to latch on to her writer friend: "I get the impression, Kip, that you're putting him on a list of possible protectors" (5). In "Sabbatha and Solitude," Sabbatha reminisces about how she became a protector of the Italian satyr, Giovanni, "whose survival depended upon the interest of an elderly patron" (*CS* 542). The notion of protectors appears not only in the previously discussed works but also in two of Williams's recently published one-act plays, *The Chalky White Substance* and *And Tell Sad Stories of the Deaths of Queens*.

In the former, a twenty-something youth, Luke, tells his older partner, Mark, a secret about his coming of age that echoes Big Daddy's childhood

experience with his protectors, Jack Straw and Peter Ochello: "Little more than a child, I had a protector, my first, who was very clever, very wise, at secret, mechanical things" (8). Their relationship becomes tense when Mark suspects Luke of duplicity:

> MARK. Bathe twice? Did you say twice? But that would mean that you disregard the water restrictions as if they didn't exist. –You know, this confirms my suspicion that you have another protector, one in a higher position in the regime, you little— cheater, yes, you get by with violating the restrictions because you give yourself at night to someone of greater power among the—
> LUKE. I've never had more than one protector at a time. That one protector now is you.
> MARK. Before me, you had others.
> LUKE. They were necessary. (5-6)

In the latter, a thirty-five-year-old male transvestite, Candy Delaney, explains how she benefitted from her relationship with a protector named Sidney Korngold:

> I had a business partner till just lately, a very nice older man who used to be my sponsor. We had a beautiful relationship for seventeen years. He brought me out in Atlanta, that long ago. I've had a very protected life till lately. (191)

Like Marguerite, Candy also used to be paid for sex with Sidney, but now she must pay for it. In order to become Karl's protector, she proposes to give him "[a]ll that I've got to offer. This lovely place at your disposal now and always. Unlimited credit at every bar in the quarter. Cash, too. A pocketful of it. And more where that pocketful came from. And no strings, Karl. Your freedom" (202). With the exception of Paolo, the previously mentioned hustlers are minor characters that appear in lesser known works.

Arguably, two of the most memorable male prostitutes in Williams's *oeuvre* are Oliver Winemiller, the physically challenged hustler in "One Arm"[32] and Chance Wayne, the castrated toyboy in *Sweet Bird of Youth*. After losing a limb, Oliver, a former boxer,[33] wanders aimlessly until he dedicates himself to a new vocation:

> He took to knocking about the country, going first to New York. It was there that Oliver learned the ropes of what became his calling. He fell in love with another young vagrant who wised him up to his commodity value and how to cash in on it. Within a week the one-armed youth was fully inured to the practices and the culture of the underworld that seethed around Times Square and the Broadway bars and the benchlined walks of the park. (*CS* 186)

After a certain period, Oliver abandons the grind of money-for-sex transactions around New York City in favor of servicing an array of wealthy protectors in Miami:

> When summer had passed, he joined the southern migration. He lived in Miami a while. He struck it rich down there. He made the acquaintance of some wealthy sportsmen and all that season he passed from one to another with money that piled up faster than he could spend it on clothes and amusement. (*CS* 186)

Analogously, Chance in *Sweet Bird of Youth* also depends on the kindness of strangers who have money and connections.

He latches onto Princess Kosmonopolis (an aging actress whose screen name is Alexandra del Lago) because she possesses both wealth and clout. In the first act of the play, it is made clear that Chance has not yet serviced

Princess. Upon awakening, the confused screen star inquires about the nature of their relationship:

> PRINCESS. But you're employed by me, aren't you. For some purpose or other?
> CHANCE. I'm not on salary with you.
> PRINCESS. What are you on? Just expenses?
> CHANCE. Yep. You're footing the bills. (24)

Chance's words temporarily appease Princess, but a bit later she questions her companion about his real intentions with her, particularly since they have not exchanged money for sex:

> PRINCESS. What's the gimmick? The hitch?
> CHANCE. The usual one.
> PRINCESS. What's that?
> CHANCE. Doesn't somebody always hold out for something?
> PRINCESS. Are you holding out for something?
> CHANCE. Uh-huh . . . .
> PRINCESS. What?
> CHANCE. You said that you had a large block of stock, more than half ownership in a sort of a second-rate Hollywood Studio, and could put me under contract. I doubted your word about that. You're not like any phony I've met before, but phonies come in all types and sizes. So I held out, even after we locked your cabana door for the papaya cream rubs. . . . (38-39)

When Chance realizes that the actress cannot use her Hollywood connections to get him into show business, he goes on the offensive.

After tape recording incriminating assertions by Princess about her drug use, he attempts to blackmail her: "Your trade's turned dirt on you, Princess. You understand that language" (42). She does not flinch, displaying as much respect for his blackmailing abilities as Hollywood has shown for his acting

skills. Instead of remunerating him for the potential harm he believes he can do to her reputation, Princess wants to reward him for providing her with a remedy for her ennui in the form of lovemaking (Clum, "The Sacrificial Stud," 142-143). Ultimately, Chance accepts her proposition, but he is not altogether happy, which is evident at the end of act one, scene one, when the conjunction of sex and money is firmly established:

> PRINCESS [*finally, softly*]. Chance, I need that distraction. It's time for me to find out if you're able to give it to me. You mustn't hang onto your silly little idea that you can increase your value by turning away and looking out a window when somebody wants you. . . . I want you. . . . I say now and I mean now, then and not until then will I call downstairs and tell the hotel cashier that I'm sending a young man down with some travelers' checks to cash for me. . . .
> CHANCE [*turning slowly from the window*]. Aren't you ashamed, a little?
> PRINCESS. Of course I am. Aren't you?
> CHANCE. More than a little. . . .
> PRINCESS. Close the shutters, draw the curtains across them. [*He obeys these commands*.] Now get a little sweet music on the radio and come here to me and make me almost believe that we're a pair of young lovers without any shame. (44)

The preceding discussion illustrates, to borrow Hanna Olsson's expression, "the non-sexuality of sexuality" in the prostitution-client relationship (qtd. in Hobson 223).

As Hobson explains, Olsson uses the phrase "to describe the dehumanization of both customer and prostitute in the sexual exchange" (223). At the beginning of act one, scene two, Chance has obviously "distracted" the Princess, for he is paying himself by filling out her travelers' checks. In a better

mood, Chance confesses to Princess that it is not the first time he has prostituted himself for personal gain. He tells her that while he was studying acting a few years back, he decided to pursue another money-making venture:

> CHANCE. And at the same time pursued my other vocation. . . . Maybe the only one I was truly meant for, love-making . . . slept in the social register of New York! Millionaires' widows and wives and debutante daughters of such famous names as Vanderbrook and Masters and Halloway and Connaught, names mentioned daily in columns, whose credit cards are their faces. . . . And . . .
> PRINCESS. What did they pay you?
> CHANCE. I gave people more than I took. Middle-aged people I gave back a feeling of youth. Lonely girls? Understanding, appreciation! An absolutely convincing show of affection. Sad people, lost people? Something light and uplifting! Eccentrics? Tolerance, even odd things they long for. . . . (47-8)

Judith J. Thompson points out the following in her study, *Tennessee Williams' Plays: Memory, Myth, and Symbol*: "Like Jack [from the fairy tale, "Jack and the Beanstalk"] Chance believes in the magic power of his 'seed' or phallus as the means to achieve wealth and fame" (137). His entry into the world of prostitution further links him with Oliver, as both began hustling in New York City and then migrated to Florida, where Chance, working as a cabana boy, met Princess and gave her the aforementioned "papaya cream rubs" (37). In the course of his southern adventures, Chance met the rich millionaire Minnie, who, according to Boss Finley's son, Tom Junior, may have given Chance a sexually transmitted disease that he, in turn, gave to Heavenly:

> I mean, you'd sleep with Minnie, that slept with any goddam gigolo bastard she could pick up on Bourbon Street or the docks, and then you would go on sleeping again with my sister. And sometime, during that time, you got something besides your gigolo fee from Minnie and passed it onto my sister, my little

> sister that had hardly even heard of a thing like that, and didn't know what it was till it had gone on too long and—. (102)

In addition to Chance, there are further examples of masseurs/hustlers in Williams's work, mostly notably Val Xavier in *Orpheus Descending*.

The itinerant stud is looking for work, and in a conversation with a potential employer, Lady Torrance, he shares his philosophical view of prostitution and its seeming unavoidability:

> VAL. I'm telling you, Lady, there's people bought and sold in this world like carcasses of hogs in butcher shops!
> LADY. You ain't tellin' me nothin' I don't know.
> VAL. You might think there's many and many kinds of people in this world but, Lady, there's just two kinds of people, the ones that are bought and the buyers! No!—there's one other kind . . .
> LADY. What kind's that?
> VAL. The kind that's never been branded. (265)

After being hired as a sales clerk, Val decides to showcase his skills as a masseur:

> VAL. Relax. [*Moving around close to her*.] I'm going to show you some tricks I learned from a lady osteopath that took me in, too.
> LADY. What tricks?
> VAL. How to manipulate joints and bones in a way that makes you feel like a loose piece of string. (298)[34]

Soon, the massages that are proffered merely serve as foreplay, as Lady begins an adulterous relationship with Val, who lashes out at his paramour when he is accused of stealing from her store: "—A not so young and not so satisfied woman, that hired a man off the highway to do double duty without paying overtime for it. . . . I mean a store clerk days and a stud nights" (304). Jabe

Torrance, Lady's husband, suspects that Val supplements his income by engaging in the world's oldest profession:

> JABE. How about older women? Don't he attract older women? The older ones are the buyers, they got the money. They sweat it out of their husbands and throw it away! What's your salary, boy, how much do I pay you?
> LADY. Twenty-two fifty a week.
> JABE. You're getting him cheap [. . .].
> LADY. I knew he would bring in trade and he brings it in.
> JABE. I bet. (310)

Jabe focuses solely on Val's marketability to women, which prompts Clum to wonder about the stud's crossover appeal:

> Is Val necessarily exclusively heterosexual? He has bummed around the French Quarter, and throughout the play he tries to avoid sexual contact with the women who pursue him. Williams came out at a time when there was less delineation between straight and gay, when the secrecy surrounding homosexuality made it possible for men to have sex with other men without fear of being branded as homosexual. ("The Sacrificial Stud" 139-140)

Interestingly, Vidal addresses Clum's point about the sexual fluidity of the pre-Stonewall period:

> For a time, Dr. Kinsey used the mezzanine of the Astor as a sort of office, where he would interview "human males" about their sex lives. I think that the somewhat phlegmatic Dr. Kinsey was secretly delighted by this warrior display, and I like to think that it was by observing the easy trafficking at the Astor that he figured out what was obvious to most of us, though as yet undreamed of by American society at large: Perfectly "normal" young men, placed outside the usual round of family and work, will run riot with each other. (102)

As in *Orpheus Descending*, legitimate massage therapy leading to a sexual relationship between masseur and client occurs in Williams's *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* and "Desire and the Black Masseur."

In the former, the dancer Kip offers his sensual touch in lieu of the writer August's desire for sexual congress:

> KIP. I'm a really good licensed masseur. I know how to relax you so you go right to sleep.
> AUGUST [*laughs tensely*]. –No, no, baby, I don't want to receive an anesthetic massage. I'd much prefer to give a massage. Of course I'm not a licensed masseur and, frankly, wouldn't be trying to or apt to induce immediate sleep. [*Kip is silent, expressionless*.] Kip, we're negotiating for an advantage, aren't we? Like most people, if not all, sometimes? (65)

In the latter, Anthony Burns meets regularly with the titular character and pays him for what can only be described as sadomasochistic sex:

> Then without any warning the Negro raised up his black palm and brought it down with a terrific whack on the middle of Burns' soft belly. The little man's breath flew out of his mouth in a gasp and for two or three moments he couldn't inhale another. Immediately after the passing of the first shock, a feeling of pleasure went through him. It swept as a liquid from either end of his body and into the tingling hollow of his grown [. . .]. Burns tried to move but the luxurious tiredness made him unable to. The Negro laughed and gripped the small of his waist and flopped him over as easily as he might have turned a pillow. Then he began to belabor his shoulders and buttocks with blows that increased in violence, and as the violence and the pain increased, the little man grew more and more fiercely hot with his first true satisfaction, until all at once a knot came loose in his loins and released a warm flow. (*CS* 220)

Clum discusses the implications of this paid act of sex:

> This transaction, like the transaction between hustler and john, seems to place desire in a loveless, materialistic framework, but Williams is always aware of the slippages in such a rigid formulation. For him, love can be found in any sexual connection, however brief or ostensibly cynical. In Williams's world, money is usually a factor in sexual transactions. ("The Sacrificial Stud" 131)

Later, danger ensues when both men no longer exchange money for sex in the bathhouse and continue their sexual practices within the context of a relationship.

At the end of the story, the masseur beats Burns to a pulp and devours him, as the young cannibals do to Sebastian. Hayman believes that, "the punishment meted out by the black masseur is gratuitous" (81). To that point, Saddik presents the following counterargument:

> Completion, continuity and human "connection" demand sacrifice in Williams's works, often a self-effacing, self-destructive sacrifice. Identification in these works is physical, aggressive and destructive. Like Sebastian, who sees God in the cruel cycle of the sea turtles devoured by the black birds, Anthony Burns must yield to the cycle of retribution which demands that the fragmentation born of transgressive desire must be eradicated, one way or another. Desire, especially desire between men in a homophobic society, is indeed, for Williams, "a mutually consumptive bond." ("The (Un)Represented Fragmentation" 353)

Saddik borrows the phrase "a mutually consumptive bond" from Bruhm, whose article on the economics of desire in Williams's work will be discussed in chapter three. Echoing Saddik's analysis, Dennis Vannatta concludes that the story, much like "One Arm," illustrates "the destructiveness of passion and the interdependence of victim and victimizer" (48). Besides street hustlers and masseurs, paid escorts like Chance show up repeatedly in Williams's work.

In *Sweet Bird of Youth*, Princess alludes to such a character named Franz Albertzart:

> I saw in Monte Carlo not too long ago. He was with a woman of seventy, and his eyes looked older than hers. She held him, she led him by an invisible chain through Grand Hotel . . . lobbies and casinos and bars like a blind, dying lap dog; he wasn't much older than you are now. Not long after that he drove his Alfa-Romeo or Ferrari off the Grand Corniche—accidentally?—broke his skull like an eggshell. I wonder what they found in it? Old, despaired-of ambitions, little treacheries, possibly even little attempts at blackmail that didn't quite come off, and whatever traces are left of really great charm and sweetness. Chance, Franz Albertzart is Chance Wayne. Will you please try to face it so we can go on together? (114)

Princess not only describes the shackles of prostitution to Chance but also compares him to the gigolo, Franz. She reminds him that she remains his last chance (pun intended) for survival: "The only hope for you now is to let me lead you by that invisible loving steel chain through Carltons and Ritzes and Grand Hotels and—" (114). Jimmy Dobyne in "Man Bring This Up Road," who is later named Christopher Flanders in *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*, is on the same metaphorical chain gang as Franz.

When he can no longer turn the trick with wealthy widows, Jimmy resorts to another ploy:

> He'd coasted on his early celebrity all through the forties, but lately things had gone against him. It started with his "sleeping trick" a couple of summers ago. Mrs. Goforth naturally didn't understand what that was but her friend on Capri gave a vivid account of it. It seemed that he had worn out his welcome at a rich lady's villa on Capri, he had been asked to give up his room for another guest expected and had tried to avoid this eviction by playing this sleeping trick on his hostess. He had taken a large

> dose of sleeping tablets but had also left an early-morning call so that they'd find him early enough to revive him. (*CS* 369)

Dobyne is not only unsuccessful in his machinations but also uninterested in servicing the rich widow, who "teases him—with food and with an absurd offer of sex—but her exploitation leads to his weeping, and she dismisses him from her house" (Spoto 190). In a letter to Paul Bigelow written on 18 February 1948, Williams comments on the Italian island's notorious history of male prostitution: "Other people who have been to Capri this season say it has not changed at all. The male population have been 'kept men' for centuries and are spoiled but beautiful" (*Selected Letters* 168). The experiences of these "kept men" are not dissimilar to those of Jimmy Dobyne and the escorts in Williams's later plays, *A Cavalier for Milady* and *The Traveling Companion*.

In *A Cavalier for Milady*, Nance's mother and Mrs. Aid avail themselves of the services of escorts, much like Sabbatha does at the end of the short story, "Sabbatha and Solitude." After their dates, both women are dissatisfied with their "pick-ups" (57), complaining about the young men's narcissism and sexually aggressiveness:

> MOTHER. But you know, I thought it a little presumptuous when he put my hand on his equipment so quickly. Not that I—but you know they shouldn't be quite so forward—so quickly.
> MRS. AID. They have other assignments, I suppose.
> MOTHER. Yes, before and after. One should demand escorts that aren't debilitated by previous engagements. (71)

The ladies decide to "investigate other services" (72), debating between "Companions for Madame" and "Cavaliers for Milady." In her notes to *A Cavalier for Milady*, Saddik provides this analysis:

> An interesting aspect of this play is that the desire of the women—the Mother and Mrs. Aid especially—is depicted in terms of stereotypically gay male desire, although they are clearly women. The women are predatory and pay "escorts" to satisfy them, even going so far as to have rendezvous in "The Ramble," a section in Central Park where gay men infamously go "cruising." (*The Traveling Companion* 304-305)

At the end of the play, the sexually starved figure of arrested development, Nance, wants to follow in her mother's footsteps by patronizing an escort service. In her phone call, she conflates the names of two different agencies:

> "Cavalier—Companions?" I, I—want one—tonight, no it's *not* too late, I'll—pay—extra! [*Snatches her mother's evening-bag from the table*.] Whatever is charged! —You have the address, Park at Fifty-five, I'll be waiting on the stone steps, and, oh, please hurry. I'll be on the steps of stone with a—lighted candle, don't disappoint me, please don't keep me waiting and send me an escort cavalier that looks like him! —*Nijinsky!* (76)

One wonders, however, if the desperate girl has succeeded in ordering an escort.

In *The Traveling Companion*, the titular character is a callow twenty-five-year-old hustler named Beau, who works as a paid companion for an elderly writer named Vieux. Beau used to be gainfully employed by Escort Service in San Francisco. He resists Vieux's overt sexual advances, affirming his staunch heterosexuality with such assertions as, "I don't share a bed with nobody except my chick, I am this ole man's traveling companion, just that,

nothing else but" (293), and, "Just get your ass off the bed or I'll phone downstairs to the house dick and say I'm bein' molested by an old pervert" (301). However, the play concludes on a completely different note, with Beau and Vieux reaching a *quid pro quo*. Besides escorts, one must consider gay-for-pay characters like Beau as yet another group of male prostitutes in Williams's work.

Interestingly, Bill McCorkle in *Small Craft Warnings*, Tye McCool in *Vieux Carré*, Karl in *And Tell Sad Stories of the Death of Queens*, and Kip and the Seaman in *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* display varying degrees of heterosexism and homophobia, but they allow gay men to service them for the right price. Such behavior allows Clum to draw parallels between Williams's work and that of the gay British playwright, Joe Orton:

> Like the homosexual events in Tennessee Williams' plays, the closeted events in *What the Butler Saw* are not depicted but are enclosed in the play's exposition. The sexual action of the play, like that of much sex farce, is repeated *coitus interruptus*. Nor is the closet a place of homosexual activity, which is only suggested by the compliant young man who, in the style of Orton's young men, will do anything if the price is right. His actions imply a willing homosexual passivity to match his heterosexual aggressiveness. (*Acting Gay* 122)

By depicting such gay-for-pay transactions, Williams conveys, according to Clum,

> an acceptance of the antipodean relationship of homosexuality and masculinity. 'Real men' can be the object of male desire. They can be 'trade'—heterosexual men who allow homosexuals to 'service' them sexually, usually for a fee." (*Acting Gay* 174)

William's work certainly features such "real men."

In *Small Craft Warnings*, Bill is described as possessing "a hustler's smile, the smile of a professional stud—now aging a bit but still with considerable memorabilia of his young charm" (228). Bill's girlfriend, Leona, reveals the extent to which Bill is infatuated with his member:

> He has a name for his thing. He calls it Junior. He says he takes care of Junior and Junior takes care of him. How long is that gonna last? How long does he figure Junior is going to continue to provide for him, huh? HUH! . . . Forever or *less* than forever? . . . Thinks the sun rises and sets between his legs and that's the reason I put him in my trailer, feed him, give him beer-money, pretend I don't notice there's five or ten bucks less in my pocketbook in the morning than my pocketbook had in it when I fell to sleep, night before. (235-236)

Bill not only takes advantage of Leona but also profits financially from the gay men he ensnares and upon whom he unleashes homophobic violence:

> Y' can't insult 'em, there's no way to bring 'em down except to beat 'em and roll 'em [. . .]. A piss-elegant one [gay man] like that is asking for it. After a while, say about fifteen minutes, I'll go in the gents' and he'll follow me in there for a look at Junior. Then I'll have him hooked. He'll ask me to meet him outside by the car or at the White Castle. It'll be a short wait and I don't think I'll have t'do more than scare him a little bit. I don't like beating 'em up. (241-242)

In this regard, Bill is the desired sexual type for another character in the play, Quentin. The latter realizes that by picking up Bobby he made an unsuitable match. Consequently, he makes public his sexual preference:

> I only go for straight trade. But this boy . . . look at him! Would you guess he was gay? . . . I didn't, I thought he was straight. But I had an unpleasant surprise when he responded to my hand on his knee by putting his hand on mine. (257)

Clum offers this explanation for Quentin's taste for rough trade:

> Quentin is suffering the physical and spiritual ravages of time and mortality, the great nemeses in Williams's world. Yet he also suffers for his awareness of the brutality of his sex life. The attraction of youth is the attraction of what has been lost emotionally, and the attraction to heterosexuality is to the possibility of an alternative to the "coarseness" of homosexual activity. Part of that coarseness involves the need to keep sex on a financial basis, a matter of distancing and control which Williams well understood—even his beloved Frank Merlo was on the payroll. ("'Something Cloudy'" 175-176)[35]

Like the exhibitionist Bill, Tye in *Vieux Carré* likes to expose himself as a way to entice potential customers.

As his girlfriend, Jane, states, "I think he unconsciously displays himself like that as if posing for a painter of sensual inclinations" (54). Unlike Bill, who simply lets men peak at his genitalia, Tye is more sexually open. For a fee, the gay-for-pay stud allows (gay) men to perform oral sex on him. This is made clear in his conversation with Jane's friend:

> WRITER. Swing your legs other way, that way's the pillow—would you, uh, like your wet shoes off?
> TYE. Shoes? Yes, but nothin' else. Once I—passed out on—Bourbon Street—late night—in a dark doorway—woke up—this guy, was takin' liberties with me and I don't go for that stuff—
> WRITER. I don't take advantages of that kind, I am—going back downstairs, if you're comfortable now . . .
> TYE. I said to this guy, "Okay, if you wanto blow me, you can pay me one hunnerd dollars—before, not after." (42)

Later on in the same scene, Tye doth protest too much when he believes he is the victim of unwanted sexual contact. Yet, he reverses himself on that allegation and then reiterates his target price:

> TYE. Both of you git this straight. No goddamn faggot messes with me, never! For less`n a hundred dollars! [*Jane becomes visible in the hall before this line*.] A hunnerd dollars, yes, maybe, but not a dime less.
> NIGHTINGALE [*emerging from the cubicle in his robe*]. I am afraid that you have priced yourself out of the market. (45-46)

Jane is well aware of her boyfriend's involvement in prostitution, telling him, "I heard you name a price, with you everything has a price" (46). The fee charged by the merchant seaman in *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* for gay-for-pay sex is not as expensive as Tye's.

Bartering with August, the sailor tells the writer, "So you can fuck me for another fin [five-dollar bill] and a drink.—Okay? 'Sat a deal?" (56). Paller offers the following commentary on the play:

> Sex in *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* is neither joyous nor freeing. It is little more than a bargaining chip in a negotiation, a commodity to be bought and sold. Kip, who gives in to August's desires only reluctantly, regards sex (*all* sex, not just gay sex) as something that animals do. (231)

The "heterosexual" stud, Karl, in *And Tell Sad Stories of the Death of Queens* charges more than the sailor but less than Bill and Tye for same-sex sexual activities. When Karl tells Candy, "You think I would be here if I'd thought you was a queer?" (192), she quickly calls him on his bald-faced lie: "You can't expect me to seriously believe that a man who has been shipping in an out of New Orleans for five years is still not able to recognize a queen in a gay bar" (193). Karl responds, "I don't go with queers" (193), but he abandons the charade and fixes his fee: "It's all part of a plot. I just want some money from

you. You can have what you want, now, for ten dollars. Let's get it over with, huh?" (203). Even though he is violent and involved in the same kind of double-dealing as Luke in *The Chalky White Substance*, Karl does have some redeeming values. Moschovakis and Roessel substantiate this view:

> Partly because of his own homosexuality, though by no means entirely because of it, Williams had a keen eye for the ways in which violent men like Karl implicated the hypocrisy and brutality of the ruling powers of 1950s America. And yet, Williams envisioned Karl with about as much sympathy as many of the other young hustlers and petty criminals who appear throughout his drama, fiction, and verse. Karl himself is a desperate, socially and economically handicapped character whose fundamental misery blinds him to the darkness of his actions, and perhaps even to his own ultimate motives. ("Those Rare Electrical Things between People" xxxii)

Just as numerous as the male hustlers inventoried herein, the female prostitutes form the third category in Williams's work.

Most of them are lowly streetwalkers who ply their trade in brothels, boarding houses, and third-rate hotels (these privileged sites of the sex industry are discussed in the next chapter). Here is a short list of female prostitutes who are only minor characters: Irene, "whose body was offered at night behind the cathedral" (*Collected Poems* 73), in the poem, "Mornings on Bourbon Street"[36]; another Irene who "works out of one of those little crib-like rooms on the further end of Bourbon" (*CS* 83) in "In Memory of an Aristocrat"; the previously mentioned Alva in *This Property is Condemned*; Star Pilcher, who moves to Birmingham to work in a brothel, in *Candles to the Sun*; Terry's mother in *Fugitive Kind*; the apparitional Goldie in *Not About Nightingales*;

Lena in *Hello from Bertha*; the old prostitute Rosita in *Camino Real*; the "simple half-Indian girl," Amada, in "Rubio y Morena" (*CS* 273); the clerk's daughter who was "drafted into the Municipal Whorehouse" in *The Municipal Abattoir* (160); Mother Duclos's daughter in *Thank You, Kind Spirit*; Helene, the stripper Candy hires to placate Karl in *And Tell Sad Stories of the Deaths of Queens*; the prostitutes that the sailors pick up in *Cairo! Shanghai! Bombay!*; and the "hot whores at the cantina" with whom Pancho and Pedro cavort in *The Night of the Iguana* (328). These prostitutes are either passing references or background characters, unlike the women that constitute the recurring "prostitute figure" of which Hale speaks in chapter one ("A Playwright to Watch" xvi).

In Williams's collection of one-act plays, *27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other Plays*, prostitutes like Bertha in *Hello from Bertha,* Mrs. Hardwicke-Moore in *The Lady of Larkspur Lotion*, and Myra in *The Long Goodbye* are all foregrounded. In *Hello from Bertha*, the titular character, who works out of a bedroom in a flophouse in the red light district of East St. Louis, sees her livelihood compromised by her condition: a combined pregnancy and spreading venereal infection. Pressured by her landlady (read: brothel operator) to pay her rent, Bertha sends a letter to a former lover, a businessman in Memphis, to rescue her. The reference to Memphis connects Bertha to two other prostitutes: a similarly named Bertha in *Fugitive Kind* and Myrtle in Williams's short story,

"The Kingdom of Earth," which was later developed into the full-length play, *Kingdom of Earth* (*The Seven Descents of Myrtle*).

The Bertha in *Fugitive Kind* is a coke-addled "frowzy blond prostitute about thirty-five" (48), who, like her namesake, works in St. Louis. While conversing with a potential client, she reveals that she is originally from Memphis (50), the city in which Myrtle used to work as a prostitute in a sporting house. Myrtle qualifies as yet another victim of sexual exploitation in Williams's work:

> He [the store manager who raped her] said his wife had found us out and he had to let me go. Some girls would have made trouble. I could of because I was only fifteen at the time. But I had too much pride so I just packed up and moved to Pensacola. Then to New Orleans. Then I finally come to Memphis. It wasn't till then I ever worked in a house and then it was to pay for an operation [abortion] I'd had to have. (*CS* 396)

At last, Myrtle is rescued from the brothel by Lot, whose proposal of marriage she accepts: "But then I thought, Oh, well, as the fellow says, they's a hell of a lot more to it, this business of sex, than a couple of people jumping up and down on each other's eggs" (*CS* 396). If Myrtle's past prostitution is a bone of contention between the siblings in "The Kingdom of Earth,"[37] Myra's present prostitution in *The Long Goodbye* is equally a source of tension between herself and her brother, Joe, who confronts her about her way of life:

> JOE. Dirty people are what *you* run around with! Geezers in fifty dollar suits with running sores on the back of their necks. You better have your blood tested!
> MYRA. You—you—you can't insult me like that! I'm going to—call Papa—tell him to—

> JOE. I used to have hopes for you, Myra. But not any more. You're goin' down the toboggan like a greased pig. Take a look at yourself in the mirror. Why did Silva look at you that way? Why did the newsboy whistle when you walked past him last night? Why? 'Cause you looked like a whore—like a cheap one, Myra, one he could get for six! (224)

Regardless of the preponderance of streetwalkers in Williams's short stories and one-act plays, the most famous female prostitute is Blanche DuBois. Indeed, she is Williams's quintessential female prostitute, the male equivalent being Chance Wayne.

In fact, Philip Weissman's 1960 article titled, "A Trio of Tennessee Williams Heroines: The Psychology of Prostitution," links together Blanche, Mrs. Hardwicke-Moore, and the forsaken Willie. Weissman's study consists of a limited psychoanalytical discussion of these three female prostitutes. His article is one of the rare works to deal specifically with prostitution as it relates to Williams's work, but it is woefully inadequate and reductive since it perpetuates the assumption that Williams's prostitutes are predominantly female. This chapter completely dispels that false impression, as it catalogues three specific categories of prostitutes: children, men, and women.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Blanche is fired from her teaching position for sexually interfering with a minor. Soon thereafter, she begins to work as a prostitute. Stanley informs his wife of her sister's new vocation:

> This is after the home-place had slipped through her lily-white fingers! She moved to the Flamingo! A second-class hotel which

> has the advantage of not interfering in the private social life of the personalities there! The Flamingo is used to all kinds of goings-on. But even the management of the Flamingo was impressed by Dame Blanche! In fact they were so impressed by Dame Blanche that they requested her to turn in her room key—for permanently! This happened a couple of weeks before she showed here. (360)

Stanley further impunes his sister-in-law's character by mentioning the extent of her notorious reputation: "Yes, did you know there was an army camp near Laurel and your sister's was one of the places called "Out-of-Bounds"? (361). Blanche confirms her sexual encounters with the army men, but she offers this justification for her actions:

> The opposite [of death] is desire. So do you wonder? How could you possibly wonder! Not far from Belle Reve, before we had lost Belle Reve, was a camp where they trained young soldiers. On Saturday nights they would go in town to get drunk—." (389)

When Stanley's evidence reaches Mitch, Blanche's pursuer, he confronts her.

As Adler argues,

> Mitch considers the unvirginal Blanche unfit as a wife to be taken home to his mother; he comes eventually to treat her as a whore, to reduce her humanity as others before him have done and as Stanley soon will. (*"Streetcar"* 70)

Georges-Claude Guilbert uses the word "Stanleyfied" to describe Mitch's aggressive new persona (104). Adler never refers to Blanche as a prostitute; he talks about Blanche's "series of one-night liaisons" (*"Streetcar"* 43) or her "brief sexual encounters" (*"Streetcar"* 45) with the "soldiers she uses sexually to assuage her guilt" (*"Streetcar"* 76). Conversely, Tischler strongly implies

that Blanche is a prostitute by mentioning "her [Blanche] opening a brothel for the neighboring army camp" (*Rebellious Puritan* 145). Clum focuses on one of Blanche's turns of phrase to label her a prostitute:

> When Blanche tells Stella that she doesn't know how much longer she can "turn the trick" (p. 332), the language may be surprising coming from a Southern aristocrat and high-school English teacher, but it is not accidental. It is the language of prostitution, and Blanche will have to prostitute herself to marry Mitch, an act of reduction out of economic necessity. (*Acting Gay* 151-152)

Williams was particularly displeased with the epithets used by various critics to describe Blanche.

He penned a letter to Justin Brooks Atkinson, dated 15 December 1947, in which he challenges those who hold a simplistic view of the *Streetcar* heroine:

> So many of the others [critics], saying 'alcoholic', 'nymphomaniac', 'prostitute', 'boozy' and so forth seemed—though stirred by the play—to be completely off the track, or nearly so. I wanted to show that people are *not* definable in such terms but are things of multiple facets and all but endless complexity that they do not fit "any convenient label" and are seldom more than partially visible even to those who live just on the other side of "the portieres." (*Selected Letters* 137)

His missive gives emphasis to his desire not only to eschew stereotypes but also avoid clichés that abound in most plays that deal with sexuality. Williams's words bring to mind arguably the best line in Brad Fraser's play, *Poor Super Man*: "Maybe fag and lesbian aren't nouns. Maybe they're verbs" (122).[38] A

case can be made that Williams's letter implies that prostitute is a verb rather than a noun.

Another major female prostitute is undoubtedly Alma Winemiller (she shares the same surname as the hustler Oliver), for she appears in various works by Williams.[39] At the end of *Summer and Smoke*, Alma meets a traveling salesman and, after a brief talk, offers to show him a good time:

> There's not much to do in this town after dark, but there are resorts on the lake that offer all kinds of after-dark entertainment. There's one called Moon Lake Casino. It's under new management, now, but I don't suppose its character has changed. (255-6)

That Alma has undergone a complete metamorphosis and become a prostitute that plies her trade in the upper rooms of the infamous Moon Lake Casino is heavily suggested.

Spoto disagrees with this interpretation of the play's denouement: "There is nothing to suggest entrance into a life of promiscuity (as some have presumptuously believed); it is simply a single gesture of reversal and defiance, a single attempt to correct a habit of an unbalanced nature" (152). While Spoto finds the ending ambiguous, Tischler categorically states that, "she [Alma] walks off arm-in-arm—headed for Moon Lake Casino—and a career as the town prostitute" (*Rebellious Puritan* 154). This conclusion to the play is different from the one Williams had initially planned, according to Devlin and Tischler:

> The "original" ending of *Summer and Smoke* is set in the rectory, a house of ill repute since the death of Alma's father, and consists mainly of verbal foreplay between Alma and Floyd Kramer, a "slightly paunchy" salesman whom she has met at a train station. (*Selected Letters* 80)

Known for the cannibalizing of his early work, Williams revised *Summer and Smoke* in 1964 as *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale*.

The updated play maintains the original denouement, but instead of bringing her prospective client to Moon Lake Casino, Alma invites him to Tiger Town, where there are "saloons, penny arcades, and rooms that can be rented for one hour" (110). Both plays are redrafts of the 1947 short story, "The Yellow Bird." This text features Alma (surname Tutwiler), a rebellious minister's daughter who, after several confrontations with her authoritarian father, decides to leave home, thus upsetting Mrs. Tutwiler: "Alma's mother screamed and went into one of her faints, because it was evident to her that Alma was going right over to one of the good-time houses on Front Street" (*CS* 235). Alma's mother's worst fear about her daughter's fate becomes reality several years later, as her daughter resides "on the shabbiest block of Bourbon Street in the Quarter" (*CS* 237) and makes her living as a prostitute:

> Six years later Alma was a character in the old French Quarter of New Orleans. She hung out mostly on "Monkey Wrench Corner" and picked up men around there. It was certainly not necessary to go into a good-time house to have a good time in the Quarter, and it hadn't taken her long to find that out. It might have seemed to some people that Alma was living a wasteful and profligate existence, but if the penalty for it was death, well, she was a long time dying. In fact she seemed to prosper on her new

> life. It apparently did not have a dissipating effect on her. (*CS* 237)

At the behest of Alma's parents, a family friend visits Alma to question the latter about her new existence. The ensuing conversation further confirms Alma's involvement in the world's oldest profession:

> "How do you live?" asked the woman.
> "What?" said Alma, innocently.
> "I mean how do you get along?"
> "Oh," said Alma, "people give me things."
> "You mean you accept gifts from them?"
> "Yes, on a give-and-take basis," Alma told her. (*CS* 237)

Alma's "give-and-take" philosophy is adopted by Jane in *Vieux Carré*, who only becomes a prostitute after she is mistaken for one.

When Jane encounters a South American gentleman who is under the impression that she is a streetwalker, she does not disabuse him of that notion. Jane does not take advantage of the Brazilian's immediate offer; nevertheless, she accepts his business card and uses it to set up a future sexual transaction with him. After selling herself, Jane tries to defend her honor to her hustling boyfriend, Tye:

> The Brazilian must have been blind drunk when he took a fancy to me in the Blue Lantern, mistook me for a hundred-dollar girl. –Tye, I'm not a whore! I'm the Northern equivalent of a lady, fallen, yes, but a lady, not a whore. (96)

Later, she justifies her prostitution with the following words: "The Brazilian was far from attractive but—my circumstances required some drastic—compromises" (109). Jane's plight underlines Savran's earlier point about "the

proximity between sexual intimacy and economic abjection" (105), and it connects her with a panoply of Williams prostitutes who must make similar compromises in order to survive. The next chapter will deal with other morally compromised participants in Williams's world of prostitution: the pimps, procurers, and profiteers.

Chapter Three:

Pimps, Procurers, Profiteers, and the Politics of Prostitution

> "According to [Luce] Irigaray, hom(m)o-sexuality describes the system of exchange under patriarchy that always refers 'the production of women, signs and commodities . . . back to men.' It is a social monopoly in which 'wives, daughters, and sisters have value only in that they serve as the possibility of, and potential benefit in, relations among men.' In this system, 'man begets man as his own likeness' and women function as conduits, esteemed only insofar as they articulate male homosocial relations, relations between men." (35-36)
>
> -David Savran, *Communists, Cowboys, and Queers*

> "Within the limits set by her social role and function, the prostitute is conceived as an essentially theatric being, capable of making mask into meaning. Balzac's prostitutes—sometimes the lowest class of streetwalker that Fleur-de-Marie represents, more often courtesans, expensive kept women, or else dancers, rats d'opera and the like—have a special capacity to cross social barriers, to exist in all milieux, to make it to the top but through a kind of demonstration that the top is in essence no different from the bottom." (156)
>
> -Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*

Fiedler argues that "the obsessive concerns of Faulkner, and his vision of the South as a world of gothic terror disguised as historic fact, ceases to be the property of a single, eccentric author and becomes a living tradition" (475). Like Faulkner, a fellow Mississippian, Tennessee Williams is often celebrated as a gothicist, for he invests the vast majority of his work with staple Gothic elements. World-renowned drama specialist C. W. E. Bigsby avers:

> The gothic tinge to a number of his plays is an expression of this violence that seeps out of the culture like the juice from a windfall apple. This is a society which has lost its connection with the living tree. Its dissolution is only a matter of time. (47)

Undoubtedly, Williams inscribes himself within the Southern Gothic American tradition.

Throughout his career, he produced numerous works that deal with what Fiedler calls "the Faulknerian syndrome of disease, death, defeat, mutilation, idiocy, and lust" (475). While Williams's Southern Gothic contemporaries—Eudora Welty, Truman Capote, Carson McCullers, and Flannery O'Connor—concentrate on recurring characters, such as the physically and psychologically damaged, the criminal, the grotesque, and the queer, Williams focuses on social outcasts and sexual nonconformists, who fall into the category of the "fugitive kind." Within this group, as discussed in chapter two, one finds the persona of the prostitute, historically marginalized, abjected, and othered. In *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, Foucault addresses the notion of otherness:

> The history of madness could be described as the history of the Other, of what is for a culture both internal and foreign and therefore to be excluded (so as to exorcise the internal danger). But this is done by shutting it away (so as to reduce its otherness). The history of the order of things could be described as the history of the Same, of what is for a culture both dispersed and related, therefore to be distinguished by kinds and collected together into identities. (xxiv)

This Foucauldian observation is particularly useful for the upcoming discussion of sexual and racial "others" in Williams's work.

This chapter will move away from the well-established relationship between the buyers and the sellers of sex in order to focus on the intermediaries in the sex trade: the pimps, procurers, and other profiteering middlemen. It will show how the issues of sexuality, morality, and politics (particularly the politics of the family) are intertwined in the American playwright's *oeuvre* and thus problematize the notion of deviance usually associated with the subject of prostitution.

I will argue that it is but a fine line that separates the powers that be from the literal prostitutes in Williams's work, as Williams uses prostitution as a symbol of the sexual nature of politics and the debasement—perversion—of justice by domineering parents, greedy relatives, shady businesspeople, and corrupt officials. In order to facilitate the discussion of the intermediaries in the sex trade, the first half of this chapter will focus on the profiteering middlemen in two of Williams's undervalued Gothic plays, *Suddenly Last Summer* and *Sweet Bird of Youth*. The second half of this chapter will analyze other Williams texts in which pimps, procurers, and profiteers appear.

Written respectively in 1958 and 1959, and forming a diptych that underscores how people's anxieties about sex (particularly the fears surrounding taboo sexuality) are projected in the gothic form, *Suddenly Last Summer* and *Sweet Bird of Youth* share uncanny similarities. After all, the two plays are set in the Deep South, take place in mansions of the Victorian Gothic

style, and share the same sense of impending harm that is accentuated by the wild cries of predatory birds. Failed artists, the obscure poet, Sebastian Venable, in *Suddenly Last Summer*, and the would-be actor, Chance Wayne, in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, are the central characters, and they both qualify as revenants. Their past transgressions and self-sacrifices, to borrow Teresa Goddu's expression, "haunt back" the survivors and fuel the sexual intrigue and Freudian family romance of each play (qtd. in Anolik 5).

Suddenly Last Summer revolves around a beautiful aesthete who never speaks or appears (the play might as well be called *Waiting for Sebastian*). Nevertheless, his ghost-like presence is felt throughout the play, mostly through the constant mention of his name (seventy times) and the presence of two *doppelgängers*, the blond Dr. Cukrowicz, dressed all in white, and Sebastian's equally blond cousin, George Holly, outfitted with one of Sebastian's white suits.[40] As Sofer puts it,

> Images of Sebastian repeat and refract until the play becomes a dizzying hall of mirrors: Cousin George appears sporting Sebastian's wardrobe, Catharine wears a suit Sebastian bought for her, and Doctor Cuckrowitz [sic] wears all white, just as Sebastian did on his dying day. No Williams play is more haunted by the body, its directives and disguises; yet in no other play is the body in question so elusive. (336)

Sweet Bird of Youth focuses on the golden boy, Chance, who defiantly returns to his hometown with the Norma Desmond-like Princess Kosmonopolis in an attempt to relive his past glory and to reclaim his former love, Heavenly Finley. Though he is a shadow of his former self, Chance is still the talk of the town,

mostly for disregarding Boss Finley's unambiguous threat to never set foot in St. Cloud.

Further intertextual similarities are apparent in the denouement of each play, which involves mob violence toward the protagonists, whose severe intoxication with pills and failure to heed warnings lead to their victimization. The two endings feature acts of defiance and deviance. In *Suddenly Last Summer*, the hunter becomes the hunted, and, in what amounts to poetic justice, the vampiric Sebastian refuses his cousin Catharine's assistance and is partly devoured by the ravenous boys of Cabeza de Lobo, an appropriately named location when one considers that *lobo* is Spanish for wolf, which in Roman slang is *lupa*, meaning prostitute (Karras 182n.86). Likewise, in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, revenge is taken upon Chance, who, after rejecting Princess's help, is castrated by Boss Finley's henchmen for infecting Heavenly with a venereal disease that caused her to have a complete hysterectomy.

In *Nightmare on Main Street: Angels, Sadomasochism and the Culture of Gothic*, Mark Edmundson explains that "gothic thrives in a world where those in authority—the supposed exemplars of the good—are under suspicion. The mind of terror Gothic senses hypocrisy in high places" (20). Both *Suddenly Last Summer* and *Sweet Bird of Youth* depict financially controlling and indomitable widowed parents—Violet Venable, Sebastian's mother, and Boss Finley, Heavenly's father—who symbolize the violence and cruelty that lurk

beneath the surface of, to reiterate Edmundson's phrase, "the supposed exemplars of the good" (20). Pretending to be paragons of virtue, the parental figures are mobilized by the return of the repressed secret.

Mrs.Venable wishes to silence her niece's claim that the boys Sebastian bought for sex overtook and partially devoured him. Mrs. Venable, much like the carnivorous birds she observed with Sebastian on their vacation to the Galapagos Islands, has her talons out. Wishing to preserve her son's reputation at all costs, Violet offers to donate money to an ill-equipped hospital on the condition that one of its physicians performs a lobotomy on her niece. Both women are locked in a bitter battle, and as Sofer duly notes, "if Violet holds the financial card, Catharine clearly holds its equivalent in the play's erotic economy" (344). Similarly, Boss Finley wants to muzzle the hecklers who disrupt his political speeches with questions about Heavenly's "whore's operation" (62).

The ruthlessness of both parents is clearly exemplified by their attempts to protect family secrets with the help of doctors, who play the role of rescuer, a Gothic archetype. Mrs. Venable becomes irate with Dr. Cukrowicz when he proposes other treatments instead of a lobotomy. The following passage shows the extent to which the matriarch is willing to morally prostitute herself by unconscionably sacrificing her niece and blackmailing a doctor:

> MRS. VENABLE. SHE'S HAD ALL THAT AT SAINT MARY'S!! Nothing else is left for her.
> DOCTOR. But if I disagreed with you? [*Pause*.]
> MRS. VENABLE. That's just part of a question: finish the question, Doctor.
> DOCTOR. Would you still be interested in my work at Lion's View? I mean would the Sebastian Venable Memorial Foundation still be interested in it?
> MRS. VENABLE. Aren't we always more interested in a thing that concerns us personally, Doctor?
> DOCTOR. Mrs. Venable!! [*Catharine Holly appears between the lace window curtains*.] You're such an innocent person that it doesn't occur to you, it obviously hasn't even occurred to you that anybody less innocent than you are could possibly interpret this offer of a subsidy as—well, as sort of a *bribe*?
> MRS. VENABLE [*laughs, throwing back her head*]. Name it that—I don't care—. There's just two things to remember. She's a destroyer. My son was a *creator*!—Now if my honesty's shocked you—pick up your little black bag without the subsidy in it, and run away from this garden!—Nobody's heard our conversation but you and I, Doctor Sugar. . . . (367-368)

In *Stage Struck: Theater, AIDS, and the Marketing of Gay America*, Sarah Schulman argues that the play underscores "the historic conspiracy between families and psychiatry to punish sexuality" (63). To avoid potential death, Catharine engages in logorrheic speeches about the events of Cabeza de Lobo.

Catharine's volubility recalls Foucault's idea that "speaking so as not to die is a task . . . as old as the word" (qtd. in Bigsby 27). According to Violet, Catharine's repetitive stories are the ravings of a madwoman, and this also conjures up another Foucauldian observation:

> From the depths of the Middle Ages, a man was mad if his speech could not be said to form part of the common discourse of men. His words were considered nul [sic] and void, without truth or significance. . . . And yet, in contrast to all others, his

> words were credited with strange powers, of revealing some hidden truth, of predicting the future, of revealing, in all their naivete, what the wise were unable to perceive . . . . [F]or centuries, in Europe, the words of a madman were either totally ignored or else they were taken as words of truth. They either fell into a void—rejected the moment they were proffered—or else men deciphered in them a naive or cunning reason, rationality more rational than that of a rational man. At all events, whether excluded or secretly invested with reason, the madman's speech did not strictly exist. (*The Archaelogy of Knowledge* 222)

At the climax of the play, when Catharine completes her uninterrupted recollection of Sebastian's death, Violet delivers an offstage order: "*Lion's View! State asylum, cut this hideous story out of her brain!*" (423). When Dr. Cukrowicz concludes, "I think we ought at least to consider the possibility that the girl's story could be true. . . ." (423), it is clear enough that he will no longer be manipulated by Mrs. Venable to "rescue" Catharine Holly by giving her a lobotomy.

Conversely, Dr. George Scudder has already performed a much-needed invasive surgery on Heavenly, for which he will be rewarded with an arranged marriage to her. Like Mrs. Venable, Boss Finley resorts to strong-arm tactics to force his daughter to participate in his pharisaical political campaign:

> BOSS [*shouting*]. You ain't going into no convent. This state is a Protestant region and a daughter in a convent would politically ruin me. Oh, I know, you took your mama's religion because in your heart you always wished to defy me. Now, tonight, I'm addressing the Youth for Tom Finley clubs in the ballroom of the Royal Palms Hotel. My speech is going out over a national TV network, and Missy, you're going to march in the ballroom on my arm. You're going to be wearing the stainless white of a virgin, with a Youth for Tom Finley button

> on one shoulder and a corsage of lilies on the other. You're going to be on the speaker's platform with me, you on one side of me and Tom Junior on the other, to scotch these rumors about your corruption. And you're gonna wear a proud happy smile on your face, you're gonna stare straight out at the crowd in the ballroom with pride and joy in your eyes. Lookin' at you, all in white like a virgin, nobody would dare to speak or believe the ugly stories about you. I'm relying a great deal on this campaign to bring in young voters for the crusade I'm leading. I'm all that stands between the South and the black days of Reconstruction. And you and Tom Junior are going to stand there beside me in the grand crystal ballroom, as shining examples of white Southern youth—in danger.
>
> HEAVENLY [*defiant*]. Papa, I'm not going to do it.
>
> BOSS. I didn't say would you, I said you would, and you will.
>
> HEAVENLY. Suppose I still say I won't.
>
> BOSS. Then you won't, that's all. If you won't, you won't. But there would be consequences you might not like. (71-72)

Boss Finley's rhetoric encapsulates two key nativist concerns: the deflowering of white girlhood, and by extension, the corruption of American purity. He keeps the pressure on his daughter by unequivocally threatening to attack her former lover: "I'm going to remove him, he's going to be removed from St. Cloud. How do you want him to leave, in that white Cadillac he's riding around in, or in the scow that totes the garbage out to the dumping place in the Gulf?" (72). Heavenly ultimately relents in the face of her father's mounting pressure, which he exerts because of his desire to protect his carefully crafted moral purity campaign. In the film adaptation of *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1962), Boss Finley exclaims, "I am against loose government, loose money, and loose women," and that statement succinctly sums up his political platform.

Notions of purity abound in *Suddenly Last Summer* and *Sweet Bird of Youth*. Believing that her son died of heart trouble because of a pre-existing condition, the mollycoddling Mrs. Venable makes the following pronouncement:

> My son, Sebastian, was chaste. Not c-h-a-s-e-d! Oh, he was chased in that way of spelling it, too, we had to be very fleet-footed I can tell you, with his looks and his charm, to keep ahead of pursuers, every kind of pursuer!—I mean he was c-h-a-s-t-e! —Chaste. . . . (361)

For his part, the domineering Boss Finley pursues an explicitly self-righteous and race-baiting campaign to preserve "the pure white blood of the South" that is motivated by calculated political gain and outright vengeance on Chance for ruining his daughter (73). One might even suggest that the moral crusader's animus toward Chance is subconscious jealousy for not having deflowered his own daughter.

After all, the types of dangerous liaisons in both plays surround taboo sexuality in the form of incest and prostitution. Mrs. Venable's and Boss Finley's unscrupulous actions are clearly driven by transgressive desire for their children. Even with her husband on his deathbed, the matriarch chose to remain on vacation with her precious son. In the film adaptation of *Suddenly Last Summer* (screenplay credited to Gore Vidal and Williams), Catharine denounces her aunt's decision with the litanous stream, "She gave up her husband," "She let her husband die," and "She chose to let her husband die

alone." In the following passage, Mrs. Venable unabashedly speaks of her close relationship with her son:

> We were a famous couple. People didn't speak of Sebastian and his mother or Mrs. Venable and her son, they said "Sebastian and Violet, Violet and Sebastian are staying at the Lido, they're at the Ritz in Madrid. Sebastian and Violet, Violet and Sebastian have taken a house at Biarritz for the season," and every appearance, every time we appeared, attention was centered on *us*!—*everyone else*! *Eclipsed*! (362)

Sofer argues that with her cherished recollection, "Violet echoes the identical twins of *Twelfth Night* with an incestuous flourish, suggesting that Violet and Sebastian shared more than their last name" (341). Indeed, Mrs. Venable's fondness for her son borders on the incestuous. This transgressive love is mirrored by Boss Finley's taboo love for his daughter.[41] In one of his typically lengthy stage directions, Williams attempts to minimize, but ultimately draws attention to, this forbidden attraction:

> *It's important not to think of his attitude toward her in the terms of crudely conscious incestuous feeling, but just in the natural terms of almost any aging father's feeling for a beautiful young daughter who reminds him of a dead wife that he desired intensely when she was the age of his daughter*. (67)

Perhaps the playwright doth protest too much, for Boss Finley completely sexualizes and objectifies his daughter, treating her like a disposable commodity.

The other dangerous liaisons are those connected with prostitution. In his article, "Blackmailed by Sex: Tennessee Williams and the Economics of Desire," Bruhm analyzes the libidinal economy at work in Williams's *oeuvre*

and how that economy is inextricably linked with, but subservient to, the political heterosexist economy (528-29). Indeed, most of the characters in Williams's work are involved in one form of prostitution or another. As mentioned in chapter two, the prostitutes in *Suddenly Last Summer* and *Sweet Bird of Youth* are the hungry urchins of Cabeza de Lobo, Chance, and Boss Finley's call-girl, Miss Lucy, and the clients are Sebastian, Princess, and Boss Finley. The procurers in these plays are Mrs. Venable and Catharine Holly, and the prostitute-like characters are Catharine's mother (Mrs. Holly) and her son, George. Nevertheless, it is particularly challenging to distinguish the prostitutes from the non-prostitutes in Williams's fiction, which subverts the stereotypical representation of prostitutes in literature as lower-class or morally bankrupt females or both.

For example, who are the real deviants in *Suddenly Last Summer*: Sebastian and the boys or Mrs. Venable, George, and his mother? After all, Mrs. Holly and her son are perfectly willing to debase (read: prostitute) themselves for financial gain by colluding with Mrs. Venable, who will not contest Sebastian's estate if they convince Catharine to undergo a dangerous experimental surgery. Shamelessly, George orders Catharine to go along with the medical procedure that will give them an inheritance of one hundred thousand dollars from their cousin Sebastian's estate: "*Jesus! What are you up to? Huh? Sister? Are you trying to RUIN us?!*" (378). George's aggressive behavior towards his sister is beyond the pale.

Paller points out that, "not only do we, as a society, feed on each other, but mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers are equally susceptible to voracious appetites that can best be satisfied by dining on their nearest and dearest" (151). Along the same lines, Tischler discusses this form of familial consumption: "The flesh-eaters always prevail in Williams' world. Sometimes they reform, but usually they just go their selfish ways, ignoring and trampling the moths along the path. Catherine's [sic] family follows this pattern" (*Rebellious Puritan* 261). This notion of predation applies to prostitution and incest in both plays, and it brings to mind Williams's quote that, "we all devour each other, in our fashion" (*Conversations* 146).[42]

Likewise, who are the criminal degenerates in *Sweet Bird of Youth*: Chance and Princess or Boss Finley and his henchmen? One must understand that the violent, segregationist politician and his operatives are responsible for the beatings of political dissidents and the castrations of both a black man and Chance. Boss Finley believes his ruthless actions are sanctioned from above:

> A lot of people approve of taking violent action against corrupters. And on all of them that want to adulterate the pure white blood of the South. Hell, when I was fifteen, I come down barefoot out of the red clay hills as if the Voice of God called me. Which it did, I believe. I firmly believe He called me. And nothing, nobody, nowhere is gonna stop me, never. . . . (73)

The politician's words, much like Mrs. Venable's, underscore an overwhelming sense of personal entitlement.

In each play, the economics of desire have been, and are, sustained respectively by the rich and the powerful: Mrs. Venable and Boss Finley. The matriarch has not only financed the vacations that allowed Sebastian to satisfy his sexual appetites but also facilitated (albeit indirectly) her son's sex life. She and her son were constantly surrounded by beautiful males during their annual mother-son pilgrimages to the most luxurious sites of conspicuous consumption. On their vacations, Sebastian had no difficulty in making sexual transactions because of his mother's role as an enabler. Her wealth helped finance his sexual adventures, and her attractiveness unconsciously lured men for him.

Sinfield wonders if Violet is really unaware of her son's secret appetites or if she chooses willful blindness (192). In this exchange, Catharine explains to Dr. Cukrowicz how she and Mrs. Venable participated in the libidinal economy as procuresses:

> CATHARINE. He bought me a swim-suit I didn't want to wear. I laughed. I said, "I can't wear that, it's a scandal to the jay birds!"
> DOCTOR. What did you mean by that? That the suit was immodest?
> CATHARINE. My God, yes! It was a one-piece suit made of white lisle, the water made it transparent! [*She laughs sadly at the memory of it*.] —I didn't want to swim in it, but he'd grab my hand and drag me into the water, all the way in, and I'd come out looking naked!
> DOCTOR. Why did he do that? Did you understand why?
> CATHARINE. —Yes! To attract!—Attention.
> DOCTOR. He wanted you to attract attention, did he, because he felt you were moody? Lonely? He wanted to shock you out of your depression last summer?

> CATHARINE. Don't you understand? I was PROCURING for him! [*Mrs. Venable's gasp is like the sound that a great hooked fish might make*.] *She* used to do it, *too*. [*Mrs. Venable cries out*.] *Not consciously!* She didn't *know* that she was procuring for him in the smart, the fashionable places they used to go to before last summer! Sebastian was shy with people. She wasn't. Neither was I. We both did the same thing for him, made contacts for him, but she did it in nice places and in decent ways and I had to do it the way that I just told you! (411-412)

D. A. Miller, in his detailed analysis of the film adaptation of the play, titled "Visual Pleasure in 1959," describes Catharine's role as "queer bait" (98), mentioning that Sebastian "launches her to fish into his clutch the local youths" (97). In the notes to her edition of *The Traveling Companion and Other Plays*, Saddik mentions that, "[i]n both *The Parade* and *Suddenly Last Summer*, soliciting lovers for someone else is interestingly referred to as 'procuring'" (309). Indeed, Dick in *The Parade* confronts Miriam with these accusatory words: "My God. Do you go around procuring lovers for Don?" (193). Another intertextual similarity between these two texts is the repetitive use of the onomatopoeic word oom-pah-pah.

The "contacts" of which Catharine speaks have also been orchestrated in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, as Boss Finley has tried numerous times to prostitute his own daughter to his older acquaintances for financial gain or social advancement or both. The patriarch's resoluteness to prioritize homosocial bonds over familial ties may be understood in light of the following explanation by Savran:

> According to Irigaray, hom(m)o-sexuality describes the system of exchange under patriarchy that always refers "the production of women, signs and commodities . . . back to men." It is a social monopoly in which "wives, daughters, and sisters have value only in that they serve as the possibility of, and potential benefit in, relations among men." In this system, "man begets man as his own likeness" and women function as conduits, esteemed only insofar as they articulate male homosocial relations, relations between men. (35-36)[43]

Like Kleb, Savran links Williams's work with Foucauldian theory by arguing that, "Williams's configuration of sexuality, like that of Foucault, is still unequivocally within a phallic and hom(m)o-sexual economy of desire" (170). This is exemplified by Boss Finley, who is perfectly willing to sacrifice his daughter by exerting his power over her for the sake of male social/professional bonding.

In her seminal article, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," Adrienne Rich presents the eight characteristics of male power as elaborated by Kathleen Gough in the essay, "The Origin of the Family":

> Men's ability to deny women sexuality or to force it upon them; to command or exploit their labor to control their produce; to control or rob them of their children; to confine them physically and prevent their movement; to use them as objects in male transactions; to cramp their creativeness; or to withhold from them large areas of the society's knowledge and cultural attainments. (183)

In support of Gough's framework, Rich provides numerous examples of these characteristics, some of which are applicable to the father-daughter relationship in *Sweet Bird of Youth*.

For example, Boss Finley forces male sexuality on his daughter (characteristic #2), and he uses her as an object in male transactions (characteristic #6) when he successfully negotiates her arranged marriage with Dr. Scudder (Rich 183-184).

Tischler broaches the delicate subject of this business arrangement:

> The evil nature of Boss Finley is disclosed in references to . . . his plans for forcing Heavenly into a distasteful marriage. There is a tone of sadistic gloating in the discussion of these plans, and even a note of incestuous interest in his comments on his daughter. (*Rebellious Puritan* 269)

In this heated exchange with her father, Heavenly not only accuses him of forever behaving like a pimp but also blames her father for not giving Chance an opportunity to succeed in more legitimate business enterprises, thus forcing him into prostitution:

> HEAVENLY. Don't give me your Voice of God speech. Papa, there was a time when you could have saved me, by letting me marry a boy that was still young and clean, but instead you drove him away, drove him out of St. Cloud. And when he came back, you took me out of St. Cloud, and tried to force me to marry a fifty-year-old money bag that you wanted something out of—
> BOSS. Now, honey—
> HEAVENLY. —and then another, another, all of them ones that you wanted something out of. I'd gone, so Chance went away. Tried to compete, make himself big as these big shots you wanted to use me for a bond with. He went. He tried. The right doors wouldn't open, and so he went in the wrong ones, and—Papa, you married for love, why wouldn't you let me do it, while I was alive, inside, and the boy still clean, still decent? (68)

Chance is no longer clean because, like the "*marchette*" (male hustlers) in Williams's *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (52), he has engaged in prostitution, which Valdine Clemens qualifies as "the 'low end' of capitalist self-promotion" (124). However, his promiscuity, self-centeredness, and unscrupulousness do not turn him into an anti-hero or even a monster. Though Chance has prostituted himself for money and connections, readers and spectators do find honor both in his quest to win back Heavenly and in his defiance of Boss Finley.

In certain respects, Chance is like Sebastian, whose egotistical nature and callous disregard for, and objectification of, his conquests are readily evident from his cousin Catharine's words:

> —Fed up with dark ones, famished for light ones: that's how he talked about people, as if they were—items on a menu.—"That one's delicious-looking, that one is appetizing," or "that one is *not* appetizing"—I think because he was really nearly half-starved from living on pills and salads. . . . (375)[44]

Chance's pursuits of both Heavenly and the American Dream are commendable, but his naïve belief in instant fame, what Edmundson calls "facile transcendence," is absolutely laughable (6). Edmundson explains that "the ethos of facile transcendence [. . .] is that you can transform yourself into a higher being with little or no exertion required" (6). Chance has an inflated sense of his talent and beauty, but he is not ready for his close-up.[45] He believes he is a star, but, in actuality, he is simply a starfucker. Edmundson sees a

significant dialectical pattern between easy transcendence and the Gothic, two notions that further link Williams's two protagonists (xvii).

While Chance's approach to life is one of easy transcendence, Sebastian's philosophical perspective can best be described as apocalyptic. The aesthete's dark view of life is made obvious during a conversation between Catharine and Dr. Cukrowicz:

> DOCTOR. In what way did you love him?
> CATHARINE. The only way he'd accept:—a sort of motherly way. I tried to save him, Doctor.
> DOCTOR. From what? Save him from what?
> CATHARINE. Completing!—a sort of!—*image*!—he had of himself as a sort of!—*sacrifice* to a!—*terrible* sort of a—
> DOCTOR. —God?
> CATHARINE. Yes, a—*cruel* one, Doctor! (397)

In apocalyptic Gothic, characters are punished for displaying hubris; as a result, Sebastian must face retribution for what his cousin Catharine describes as his "fatal error" (419). Sebastian's tragic mistake lies in his refusal to keep paying the hordes of children for their sexual services. As Bruhm explains, the failure to respect his part of the contract has dire consequences:

> By attempting to correct the situation, Sebastian reneged on the economic systems that had allowed him his pleasure in the first place; he transgressed the cardinal rule of anonymous balance that the city marketplace demands, and attempted to privilege his libidinal economy over the political one. As a result, the law of exchange upon which the city is based moved to re-assert itself ("Blackmailed by Sex" 532).

Similarly, Chance's decision to no longer participate in sexual transactions has serious repercussions.

Unlike Sebastian, Chance does not suffer a physical death, but, as Clum cogently points out, he undergoes a symbolic one: "Chance is castrated, not killed, but in Williams's world in which sex is life, castration *is* death" ("The Sacrificial Stud" 143). Indeed, the sexually violated Chance is rendered unable to participate in the libidinal economy by working as a prostitute or to contribute to the political heterosexist one by producing an offspring. The attack on his virility is hinted at throughout the play. According to Tischler, Chance

> embodies the realization that sex without its vital connection to the rest of life is meaningless. Men castrate one another physically, as women do their men emotionally, because of sex envy. But man can also castrate himself by his prostitution of natural powers. And he comes to hate himself for what he sees in himself of the world's corruption. (*Rebellious Puritan* 272)

His physical castration is virtually guaranteed following the mental castration suffered by Boss Finley.

Adler expands upon Tischler's point by providing very specific examples of impotence that are illustrated in the play:

> Finley's henchmen, however, do not hesitate: if Chance faces literal castration at play's end, the Heckler has earlier suffered an analogous fate when the Boss's men render him speechless by a jab to the larynx, denying him the voice that gives him purpose. So to the overarching network of imagery of castration in all its forms—Heavenly's sterility; Finley's impotence; Chance's sexual mutilation; the Princess Kosmonopolis's degradation by time, drugs, and the critics; the random Black man's castration—must be added the enforced silence of the Heckler. ("Monologues and Mirrors" 145)

Though the epitome of power, the big political wheel has to pay for sex by keeping a call-girl, Miss Lucy, who eventually emasculates him. Tischler remarks that "[h]is mistress is colorful—more than a mere variation of the old heart-of-gold prostitute" (*Rebellious Puritan* 273). Boss Finley learns of his paramour's lack of discretion and outright disrespect from his son:

> TOM JUNIOR [*laughing so hard he staggers*]. Who is Miss Lucy? You don't even know who she is, this woman you keep in a fifty-dollar-a-day hotel suite at the Royal Palms, Papa?
> BOSS. What're you talkin' about?
> TOM JUNIOR. That rides down the Gulf Stream Highway with a motorcycle escort blowin' their sirens like the Queen of Sheba was going into New Orleans for the day. To use her charge accounts there. And you ask who's Miss Lucy? She don't even talk good of you. She says you're too old for a lover.
> BOSS. That is a goddam lie. Who says Miss Lucy says that?
> TOM JUNIOR. She wrote it with lipstick on the ladies' room mirror at the Royal Palms.
> BOSS. Wrote what?
> TOM JUNIOR. I'll quote it to you exactly. "Boss Finley," she wrote, "is too old to cut the mustard." (64-65)

So while he pretends to be a puritan, Boss Finley behaves otherwise, proving that there is a fine line between playing politics and turning tricks. He has no credibility when it comes to denouncing prostitution, since he knows every trick of the trade. His political posturing and scapegoating of Chance stand as testimony to the era's middle-class war on sexuality during the Eisenhower era.

With *Suddenly Last Summer* and *Sweet Bird of Youth*, Williams both reinforces the dominant culture's sexual hypocrisy and subverts the demonizing of the sexual other by so-called defenders of propriety, whose own immorality

is astonishingly similar to the deviance they usually ascribe to the persona of the prostitute. Brooks argues that it is but a fine line that separates those involved in prostitution:

> Within the limits set by her social role and function, the prostitute is conceived as an essentially theatric being, capable of making mask into meaning. Balzac's prostitutes—sometimes the lowest class of streetwalker that Fleur-de-Marie represents, more often courtesans, expensive kept women, or else dancers, rats d'opera and the like—have a special capacity to cross social barriers, to exist in all milieux, to make it to the top but through a kind of demonstration that the top is in essence no different from the bottom. (156)

Brooks's idea "that the top is in essence no different from the bottom" (156) speaks to the character of the corrupt businesspeople and Machiavellian politicians who, like Boss Finley, participate in, and profit from, the sex trade. I agree with this statement by Savran:

> In *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1956), perhaps the most despicable character in Williams's work, Boss Finley, is epitomized by his fanatical and vicious racism, by his declaration of "the threat of desegregation to white women's chastity" and fulmination against "blood pollution." (126)

Boss Finley's fears of miscegenation lead him to commit dastardly deeds, such as the beating of hecklers and the castration of enemies.

In a conversation with Chance, the minor character Scotty implicates the politician in an account of political malfeasance: "Well, they picked out a nigger at random and castrated the bastard to show they mean business about white women's protection in this state" (89). Hardly surprised by the reported

incident, Chance believes that such savage attacks are motivated by sexual jealousy:

> SCOTTY. You doubt they cut that nigger?
> CHANCE. Oh, no, that I don't doubt. You know what that is, don't you? Sex-envy is what that is, and the revenge for sex-envy which is a widespread disease that I have run into personally too often for me to doubt its existence or any manifestation. (89-90)

Boss Finley denies any involvement in the racially motivated crime; however, his words do betray him:

> As you all know I had no part in a certain operation on a young black gentleman. I call that incident a deplorable thing. That is the one thing about which I am in total agreement with the Northern radical press. It was a deplorable thing. However . . . I understand the emotions that lay behind it. The passion to protect by this violent emotion something that we hold sacred: our purity of our own blood! But I had no part in, and I did not condone the operation performed on the unfortunate colored gentleman caught prowling the midnight streets of our Capitol City. . . . (107)

In Williams's work, there are several other seedy characters who not only share Boss Finley's deep-seated racism and sex-envy but also partake in criminal activity. This section will move away from the comparative study of the pimps, procurers, and profiteers in *Suddenly Last Summer* and *Sweet Bird of Youth* in order to focus on other Williams texts in which appear numerous moral prostitutes and middlemen in the sex trade.

If, on the one hand, the moral prostitute Boss Finley is responsible for the "cutting" of a black man, on the other hand, Jabe Torrance and his segregationist acolytes in The Mystic Crew, "a Ku Klux Klan-like group," in

Orpheus Descending are guilty of setting fire to a business and committing manslaughter (Clum, "The Sacrificial Stud," 137). To his nurse, Jabe boasts about the crime that killed his future wife's father:

> He [Lady's father] had a wine garden on the north shore of Moon Lake. The new confectionery sort of reminds me of it. But he made a mistake, he made a bad mistake, one time, selling liquor to niggers. We burned him out. We burned him out, house and orchard and vines and "The Wop" was burned up trying to fight the fire. (312)

The arrival of the stud Val Xavier in the community ignites both sexual desire and jealousy. Sheriff Talbott's line to Val, "A good-looking boy like you is always wanted" (318), is a double-edged sword that brings to mind the notion of sex-envy of which Chance speaks in *Sweet Bird of Youth*.

Clum explains that,

> Val Xavier is mutilated and sanctified for his sexual potency, which is a threat to other men because the sexual free agent is a magnet, drawing women outside the boundaries of patriarchal authority and marriage. ("The Sacrificial Stud" 136)

He further argues that Val poses not only a sexual threat but also a racial one:

> He wears a snakeskin jacket, a kind of Dionysian remnant of his link with the wildness of nature and human desire, but also connoting the Judeo-Christian notion of temptation. He also carries with him a guitar, his version of Orpheus's lyre, but Val's guitar connects him to the blues, and through them to the racial other, the Black. On his guitar are inscribed the names of great Black musicians: Leadbelly, Bessie Smith, King Oliver, and Fats Waller. ("The Sacrificial Stud" 136)

Though Val is not a black man, segregationists like Talbott view him as a racial "other," and they treat him accordingly. This is perfectly illustrated by Talbott's chilling and clear-cut threat to Val:

> But I'm gonna tell you something. They's a certain county I know of which has a big sign at the county line that says, "Nigger, don't let the sun go down on you in this county." That's all it says, it don't threaten nothing, it just says, "Nigger, don't let the sun go down on you in this county!" [*Chuckles hoarsely. Rises and takes a step toward* VAL.] Well, son! You ain't a nigger and this is not that county, but, son, I want you to just imagine that you see a sign that said to you: "Boy, don't let the sun rise on you in this county." I said "rise," not "go down" because it's too close to sunset for you to git packed an' move on before that. But I think if you value that instrument in your hands as much as you seem to, you'll simplify my job by not allowing the sun tomorrow to rise on you in this county. 'S that understood, now, boy? (320-321)

In the sheriff's county, outsiders will be not tolerated, nor will political dissidents.

For example, the militant nonconformist Carol Cutrere relates how she was mistreated by community members whose political sensibilities were diametrically opposed to hers:

> And when that Willie McGee thing came along—he was sent to the chair for having improper relations with a white whore—[*Her voice is like a passionate incantation*.] I made a fuss about it. I put on a potato sack and set out for the capitol on foot. This was in winter. I walked barefoot in this burlap sack to deliver a personal protest to the governor of the state. Oh, I suppose it was partly exhibitionism on my part, but it wasn't completely exhibitionism; there was something else in it, too. You know how far I got? Six miles out of town—hooted, jeered at, even spit on!—every step of the way—and then arrested! Guess what for? Lewd vagrancy! Uh-huh, that was the charge, "lewd

> vagrancy," because they said that potato sack I had on was not a respectable garment. (251-252)

Carol's allusion to the notorious trial of Willie McGee also brings to mind the infamous cases of Emmitt Till and the Scottsboro boys. Bigsby discusses the political and historical subtext of Williams's *Orpheus Descending*:

> Written before the Civil Rights movement made such a resolute condemnation of southern bigotry and racism fashionable, the play is as sharply political as anything Williams had written since his days with the Mummers in St. Louis. Indeed, there is an echo of that period in the fact that Carol Cutrere had once protested over the Scottsboro case in which nine black youths had been charged with the rape of two white prostitutes in Scottsboro, Alabama. (57-58)[46]

When Val fails to heed the sheriff's warning, history repeats itself, as the sexy drifter suffers the same fate as Lady's father when he is burned to death by the identical criminals at the end of the play.

The use of fire by community leaders to intimidate and punish rivals links *Orpheus Descending* with Williams's *Script for the Film Baby Doll* (henceforth this text will be referred to as *Baby Doll*). After all, to ruin his rival's prosperous business, the desperate cotton-gin worker Archie Lee Meighan burns down Silva Vacarro's "Syndicate Cotton Gin." The vigilantes in these plays operate like the "agents of death" (Bigsby 51) in *Camino Real*, the Streetcleaners, who, according to Paller, serve as "Williams's metaphor for the violence visited on the persecuted of the world" (72). Another similarity between the two works is the use of derogatory terms "nigger" and "Wop."

Lady's deceased father is constantly referred to as "The Wop" by the members of The Mystic Crew, and the same disparaging expression is hurled at the Sicilian, Silva. Though he is well aware of the community's anti-foreigner sentiment and the potential danger it poses to his lucrative enterprise, Silva tauntingly shows his steadfastness and defiance in the face of discrimination: "If anybody's got anything more to throw, well, here's your target, here's your standing target! The wop! The foreign wop!!" (30). After his "Syndicate Cotton Gin" is destroyed in a conflagration, Silva and his employee, Rock, bring evidence of Archie Lee's involvement in the arson to the county official, the Marshal. However, they meet with firm resistance from the official (38-40). Later, in what mirrors Talbott's anti-foreigner speech to Val, the Marshal accuses Silva of being the architect of his own misfortune:

> You take the advice of an old man who knows this county like the back of his hand. It's true you made a lot of enemies here. You happen to be a man with foreign blood. That's a disadvantage in this county. A disadvantage at least to begin with. But you added stubbornness and suspicion and resentment. [VACARRO *makes an indescribable sound*.] I still say, a warm, friendly attitude on your part could have overcome that quickly. Instead, you stood off from people, refused to fraternize with them. Why not drop that attitude now? If some one [sic] set fire to your gin—I say that's not impossible. Also, I say we'll find him. But I don't have to tell you that if you now take your cotton across the river, or into another county, it will give rise to a lot of unfriendly speculation. No one would like it. No one. (41-42)

The Marshal's words betray an obvious anti-foreigner sentiment.

In this regard, the Marshal joins a long list of Williams characters who favor discrimination based on race, like Boss Finley, Jabe Torrance, Archie Lee

Meighan, Sheriff Talbott, and the cotton-gin owner in Williams's one-act play, *27 Wagons Full of Cotton*, Jake Meighan. Unmistakably, Meighan displays his crass ignorance with the following assertion:

> I drove that pack of niggers like a mule skinner. They don't have a brain in their bodies. All they got is bodies. You got to drive, drive, drive. I don't even see how niggers eat without somebody to tell them to put the food in their moufs! (34)

By waging a campaign of intimidation, physical violence, and murder (that often turns racist), these law enforcement officials, politicians, and businesspeople amount to moral prostitutes who make a living by exploiting people.

Falk takes issue with Williams's recurring depiction of business leaders: "His portrayal of the businessman, usually a villain or a clown, is often a caricature created out of a dramatic need or a theory" (26). Her example of a binary classification brings to mind Savran's point about the dichotomies regarding desire in Williams's work:

> With a remarkable consistency, desire is provoked by differences in race, ethnicity, social class, and age. Almost inevitably, subject and object are configured as antitheses that are congruent with a series of binary oppositions—white/black, wealthy/poor, old/young. Almost inevitably the first in the pair is granted the priority of the desiring subject, while the second is objectified and exoticized, and thereby endowed with the power to arouse sexual desire. (125)

Adler's 1990 study also discusses such dichotomies in Williams's work:

> Through this extensive system of dichotomies, Williams makes his thematic point that to fragment or dissociate human experience by seeing it as a mutually exclusive, either/or series

> of options, rather than to regard it from an integrative, both/and perspective, is one of our greatest sins, debilitating both to the individual and to society. To set up and live by such a Manichean dualism—one, for instance, that claims sexuality is always brutalization and can never become salvation, that the bestial cannot exist alongside the beautiful, or that only reality and never fantasy can be true and life-giving—is to deny humankind's condition as creatures of the Fall who have been redeemed, and thus to invite emotional and psychic imbalance and disorder. (*"Streetcar"* 33)

Whereas Williams makes his point through an "extensive system of dichotomies" (33), Agustín does so by problematizing any binary logic regarding sexuality, let alone prostitution. In her article, "The Cultural Study of Commercial Sex," she aims to disrupt the dualisms (male/female; sex/gender; mind/body; agent/victim; public/private) that impact on the prostitution debate.[47] Agustín proposes a new theoretical framework for the study of the sites of, and "social actors" in, the sex industry that goes beyond the stereotypical views surrounding prostitution (622).[48]

I apply Agustín's "sex-industry framework" to analyze commercial sex in Williams's work since Williams also blurs the boundaries between the buyers and sellers of sex, thus offering a more nuanced, more calibrated view of prostitution (618). Several recurring sites of the sex industry that are listed in Agustín's article—such as bars, brothels, beaches, bathhouses, massage parlors, cinemas, casinos, and shipboard activities—are indeed present in Williams's *oeuvre* (622). Some of the shipboard activities in William's work occur on yachts, like the one in *Sweet Bird of Youth* on which Chance earns his "gigolo

fee" from Minnie (102), or the one in the short story, "One Arm," in which prostitutes Oliver Winemiller and a girl are asked to perform in a blue movie by the boat's owner, a broker (*CS* 186).[49] This businessman, a purveyor of sex and pornography, is later killed by Oliver in a crime of passion for which the male hustler receives the death sentence.

Agustín's analysis ties in to Savran's discussion of Williams's play, *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel*, given that the hotel serves as "a place of buying and selling" (138), and "a locale in which the most intimately personal and sexual exchanges take place" (138). Savran's point is further developed by O'Connor in her article, "'Living in this little hotel': Boarders on Borders in Tennessee Williams's Early Short Plays." While she correctly points out that the boarding house constitutes the dominant setting in Williams's early works, I argue that it is the hotel that serves as the privileged site of the sex industry in Williams's fiction, particularly the texts he wrote during his prolific period between 1944 and 1961. I do not discuss "little hotel" life (and its conjunction of sex and money) in his apprentice plays, such as *Fugitive Kind*, or those collected in *27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other One-Act Plays*, for O'Connor's article has already addressed that subject in relation to these plays.

Like O'Connor, who explains that in boarding houses, "rooms were separated into three levels of accommodation determined by price: the private room, the semi-private cubicle or ward, and the dry space on an open floor"

(104), I divide Williams hotels into three categories of accommodation: 1) the fashionable sites of conspicuous consumption, 2) the second-class establishments, and 3) the third-class, flea-bag hotels and boarding houses. Luxurious hotels include those favored by Violet and Sebastian Venable, such as The Shepheard's Head in Cairo, The Hotel Plaza Athénée in Paris, and The Ritzes in Madrid and Paris.

Moreover, The Hotel Excelsior in Rome provides temporary escape for Karen Stone, while The Palm Beach Hotel and The Royal Palms Hotel offer similar refuge for Princess. The aforementioned Royal Palms is also where Boss Finley keeps his call-girl, Miss Lucy, in a "fifty-dollar-a-day hotel suite" (64). Other grand hotels include The Siete Mares Hotel in *Camino Real*, catering to the upper-class, The Monteleone Hotel, where, according to the gossiping women in *The Rose Tattoo*, the Legionnaires raped a girl they picked up on Canal Street, and the unnamed price-gouging hotels patronized by Big Daddy and Big Mama during their vacations in Europe and North Africa.

Examples of less posh establishments are Blanche's temporary home, The Hotel Flamingo, a "second-class hotel which has the advantage of not interfering in the private social life of the personalities there!" (360), Moon Lake Casino,[50] where Alma Winemiller plies her trade in the upper rooms, and Manhattan's "small East Side Hotel in the Fifties" in the short story, "Two on a Party" (*CS* 302), where Billy and Cora unabashedly bring in their trade. Some

of the seediest hotels in Williams's fiction include the "Ritz Men Only" in *Camino Real*, where there are only single beds available for a dollar and fifty cents, the Silver Dollar Hotel in *The Mutilated*, the frowsy Costa Verde Hotel in *The Night of the Iguana*, and the dingy Texas Star Hotel in the short story, "Rubio y Morena," where the prostitute Amada makes advances to, and services, the writer Kamrowski.

Ubiquitous, the hotel serves as a locus of meditation on the different forms of prostitution in Williams's fiction, and this privileged site of the sex industry further exposes the participants in commercial sex. Williams's hotels bring together down-and-out male and female streetwalkers, higher paid gigolos and call-girls, profiteering middlemen, greedy business owners, and clients from all walks of life. This final section will draw attention to the pimps, madams, procurers, and hotel proprietors in Williams's work who make a living by facilitating sexual transactions. One can divide these middlemen in the sex trade into three categories.

The first category involves those who profit directly from the sex trade; that is, the owners of brothels, boarding houses and seedy hotels who either encourage or tolerate prostitution within their establishments. In Williams's one-act play, *The Lady of Larkspur Lotion*, Mrs. Wire uses strong-arm tactics to intimidate her tenant, Mrs. Hardwick-Moore, who is saddled with the disparaging sobriquet "the Lady of Larkspur Lotion": "You think I've been in

this business seventeen years without learning nothing about your kind of women?" (84). Mrs. Wire sums up the philosophy of those in her position (read: madam), who live in large measure of the avails or profits of prostitution:

> I never spy and I never listen at doors! The first thing a landlady in the French Quarter learns is not to *see* and not to *hear* but only collect your *money!* As long as that comes in—okay, I'm blind, I'm deaf, I'm dumb! But soon as it stops, I recover my hearing and also my sight and also the use of my voice. If necessary I go to the phone and call up the chief of police who happens to be an in-law of my sister's! (85)

The landlady's willful blindness of the sexual transactions occurring within her establishment is a trait shared by the manager of the Texas Star Hotel in Williams's "Rubio y Morena." In the story, Amada suffers through a tumultuous relationship with Kamrowski, which culminates in her leaving the writer upon learning of his affair with a new blond mistress. Five months after their separation, Kamrowski returns to the Texas Star Hotel, but he is unable to learn of her whereabouts at first, because "the manager of the hotel pretended to have no knowledge of the girl" (*CS* 278).

Like Mrs. Wire, Goldie, a brothel operator in Williams's one-act play, *Hello from Bertha*, finds her voice and threatens to evict the titular prostitute from her establishment if the latter does not pay her rent. Goldie sets the record straight with her combative tenant, Bertha: "That's a fine way for you to be talking, me keeping you here just out of kindness and you not bringing in a red, white or blue cent for the last two weeks!" (233). Regarding the payment of rent, the landladies in *The Strangest Kind of Romance*, "The Malediction," and

"The Mattress by the Tomato Patch" make special arrangements with some of their tenants. The latter are encouraged to service the former sexually in lieu of paying rent. Another vocal profiteer who turns a blind eye to prostitution is A. Ratt, who runs the "Ritz Men Only" in *Camino Real*. Though he chides the Baron de Charlus for his indiscretions with the male prostitute Lobo, "Why don't you take these joy rides at the Siete Mares?" (465), Ratt is perfectly content to provide accommodations for those turning tricks at his seedy hotel.

The second category of intermediaries includes those who work as full-time pimps. The most striking example of a pimp in Williams's work is the Contessa in *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*. This lengthy passage implicates the Contessa in prostitution and highlights her various machinations:

> Mrs. Stone's meeting with the boy, Paolo, was fairly recent and had also come about through the elderly Contessa. Paolo was not the first Roman youth that the Contessa had presented to her. There had been three others, and Mrs. Stone's association with each had been rather expensive for her in spite of the fact they had served her only as escorts. A more intimate form of service was probably what each of them was prepared to offer but Mrs. Stone had not required it of them. At the point where each of them had approached her, with slightly varying excuses, for the loan of a considerable sum of money, always with the intimation that this would place them more completely at her disposal, Mrs. Stone had drawn back. Not disdainfully but rather sadly she had made them the loans, assuring them, at the same time, that they had misunderstood her desire for companionship, and she had not seen them again. What Mrs. Stone did not know was that each of these solicitations had been prompted by the Contessa and that the sums secured had been divided with the old lady. This was at first unknown to her but she came to suspect it, for promptly after the dismissal of each young man the old lady would appear with another, much like a merchant displaying a

> series of articles to a customer hard to please. Mrs. Stone began to suspect this connivance. (44-45)

Mrs. Stone eventually realizes that the Contessa is on the take and that the "*poule de luxe*" (59), Paolo, is on the make. Consequently, she confronts him at the end of the novel:

> [Y]our friend, the Contessa, is a female pimp with a collection of handsome boys she calls marchettas that she disposes of to the highest bidder. But she has found out that I won't engage in that sort of ugly traffic, and so she's decided to pass you along to someone that she thinks will! (141)

An even more sinister example of a female pimp in Williams's work is the Arab woman from Marrakech who, as mentioned in chapter two, unabashedly directs her infant to service Big Daddy. Unlike the morally compromised Contessa and the Arab woman, there are other characters who engage in a more innocuous form of pimping.

For example, Mae and Gooper in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* act, according to their sister-in-law, "like a couple of cardsharps fleecing a sucker" as they pimp their children to get an inheritance from Big Daddy, who is disgusted by his grandchildren's tricks (24). Similarly, Amanda Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie* tries to pimp her daughter Laura into marriage. The matriarch sets out on an ambitious project to ensnare a gentleman caller for her reclusive daughter: "Girls that aren't cut out for business careers usually wind up married to some nice man. [*She gets up with a spark of revival*.] Sister, that's what

you'll do!" (157). The notion of entrapment is further illustrated in this mother-daughter exchange:

> LAURA. You make it seem like we were setting a trap.
> AMANDA. All pretty girls are a trap, a pretty trap,[51] and men expect them to be. (192)

Like Amanda, Mrs. Yorke in *Why Do You Smoke So Much, Lily?* wishes to marry off her daughter Lily, who feels her mother's unrelenting pressure but refuses to enter a loveless marriage:

> LILY. I'm surprised you don't suggest that I try a little old-fashioned bundling!
> MRS. YORKE. You know very well what I mean!
> LILY [*writhing*]. Sure, I know what you mean! Only it makes me feel sick at my stomach! Refined, high-society prostitution! Here is my body! Take off my clothes and climb on! All I demand is a legal contract and lots of cold cash! (49)

Aside from these parents, other family members and close friends can act as intermediaries.

Bodey Bodenhafer in *A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur* acts as a procuress, eager to secure a marriage for her twin brother Buddy with her roommate, Dorothea Gallaway. Though Dorothea tells her that Buddy is not her "type" (126) and that she already has an "understanding" (127) with T. Ralph Ellis, Bodey advises her friend to choose security over passion:

> Dotty, I tell you, Dotty, in the long run or the short run I'd place my bet on Buddy, not on a—fly-by-night sort of proposition like this, this—romantic idea you got about a man that mostly you see wrote up in—society pages . . . (127)

Clare in *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* serves an intermediary, attempting to match the writer August with the dancer Kip (26-27). And, in *The Night of the Iguana*, Shannon accuses Hannah Jelkes of peddling/pimping a family member for shelter: "By God, you're a hustler, aren't you, you're a fantastic cool hustler" (306). Of note, in the 1964 movie version of *The Night of the Iguana*, this accusatory line is uttered by Maxine instead of Shannon. It proves to be an important change, since it adds to the tension of the triangular relationship involving Maxine, Shannon, and Hannah.

According to Hirsch, "Hannah is the fair heroine, the saint, to Maxine's whore" (68). I disagree with Hirsch's reductionistic view of the two women and his ascribing moral superiority to Hannah. After all, both women are trying to "hustle" Shannon, and their battle for his attention is comparable to Mrs. Venable and Catharine's fight over Sebastian in *Suddenly Last Summer*. Schulman confirms Hannah's form of hustling in her analysis of the play's 1964 film adaptation:

> Enter Hannah Jelkes and her grandfather Nonno (Lawrence McCauley), who have traveled together for twenty-five years working the tourist trade with their sketches and poetic recitations. They're broke, and she desperately needs to hustle everyone in sight from Maxine, to four ultra-vixen Nazi tourists, to the busloads of angry Texas schoolmarms. (77)[52]

Hannah's "hustling" is similar to that of the artist, Nightingale, who, in Williams's later play, *Vieux Carré*, says the following:

> I have to provide my own light bulbs by unscrewing them from the gentleman's lavatory at the City of the Two Parrots, where I

> ply my trade. Temporarily, you know. Doing portraits in pastel of the tourist clientele. [*His voice is curiously soft and intimate, more as if he were speaking of personal matters*.] Of course I . . . [*He coughs and clears his throat*.] . . . have no shame about it, no guilt at all, since what I do there is a travesty of my talent, I mean a prostitution of it, I mean, painting these tourists at the Two Parrots, which are actually two very noisy macaws. (17)

Nightingale's words to his writer friend underscore the whoredom involved in compromising one's art.

The third category of middlemen concerns those who occasionally procure places for sex after receiving a bribe at work. This is the case with the Pullman conductor in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, who was instrumental in facilitating Chance and Heavenly's first sexual encounter. Though Chance reminisces with Aunt Nonnie about the magical moment when he and Heavenly consummated their relationship, he is well aware that the fateful night involved a money-for-sex transaction:

> CHANCE [*rising*]. I bribed the Pullman conductor to let us use for an hour a vacant compartment on that sad, home-going train—
> AUNT NONNIE. I know, I— I—
> CHANCE. Gave him five dollars, but that wasn't enough, and so I gave him my wrist watch, and my collar pin and tie clip and signet ring and my suit, that I'd bought on credit to go to the contest. First suit I'd ever put on that cost more than thirty dollars.
> AUNT NONNIE. Don't go back over that.
> CHANCE. —To buy the first hour of love that we had together. (81)

The Pullman conductor's actions can be linked to those of the usher in Williams's short story, "The Mysteries of the Joy Rio," who also receives a bribe at work to overlook sexual encounters.

Naturally, the usher's behaviour is in direct violation of his employer's order:

> The new usher [George] at the Joy Rio was a boy of seventeen and the little Jewish manager had told him that he must pay particular attention to the roped-off staircase to see to it that nobody slipped upstairs to the forbidden region of the upper galleries. (*CS* 111)

Compromised by his own furtive sexual activities with his girlfriend, George enters into a financially rewarding *quid pro quo* arrangement with Mr. Gonzales:

> Mr. Gonzales knew about George and Gladys; he made it his business, of course, to know everything there was to be known about the Joy Rio, which was his earthly heaven, and, of course, George also knew about Mr. Gonzales; he knew why Mr. Gonzales gave him a fifty cent tip every time he inquired his way to the men's room upstairs, each time as if he had never gone upstairs before. (*CS* 112)

As mentioned in chapter two, the short story, "Hard Candy," revisits the same events of the short story, "The Mysteries of the Joy Rio," although Williams altered the names of Mr. Gonzales to Mr. Krupper and George to an unnamed usher. The transaction between the two characters in the later story is described in the following way: "Mr. Krupper arrives at the box and assures the usher's neutrality with a liberal tip" (*CS* 360).

Furthermore, Gutman's minion in *Camino Real*, Abdullah, supplements his income by working as a procurer. When Marguerite Gautier wishes to be sexually satisfied by Ahmed, she uses the boy, Abdullah, as a go-between. She compensates Abdullah with money and jewelry, much like Chance does with the Pullman conductor (528-529). As opposed to these occasional money-for-sex transactions between strangers through the involvement of intermediaries discussed herein, there are lesser-known and longer-lasting forms of prostitution. To that point, chapter three presents a segue into the subject matter of chapter four, which will discuss the whoredom of loveless marriages in Williams's work.

Chapter Four:

"A Sort of Self-Destroying, Legal Prostitution": The Whoredom of a Loveless Marriage in Williams's Work

Love and marriage, love and marriage
Go together like a horse and carriage
This, I tell you brother
You can't have one without the other

Love and marriage, love and marriage
It's an institute you can't disparage
Ask the local gentry
And they will say it's elementary

Try, try, try to separate them, it's an illusion
Try, try, try and you will only come to this conclusion

Love and marriage, love and marriage
Go together like the horse and carriage
Dad was told by mother, you can't have one
You can't have none, you can't have one without the other

-Frank Sinatra, "Love and Marriage" (1956)

"Love is not an operative term for the men in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. It is a word used only by Maggie and Big Mama; the men are left to wonder: "Wouldn't it be funny if it were true?" (pp. 80, 173). Not being able to accept the love of women, the men cannot accept the unspoken notion of sexual love between men. Nor can Williams convincingly offer them that option. Heterosexual marriage, however, is either the hostility of Big Daddy toward the overbearing Big Mama or the grotesque charade of 'normality' performed by Gooper and Mae" (160-161).

-John Clum, *Acting Gay*

Released in 1956 by Capitol Records, Frank Sinatra's love song, "Love and Marriage"[53] not only maintains that "love and marriage go together like a horse and carriage" but also that "it's an institute you can't disparage." The song was popular during a sanitized era that Robert Lowell calls "the tranquilized *Fifties*" (*Life Studies* 85).[54] Sinatra's ode to "connubial felicity"

(202), a euphemism used by John Buchanan in Williams's *Summer and Smoke* in order not to offend Alma's sensibilities, provides a striking contrast to Williams's depiction of love and marriage in his work. Regarding love and marriage, Sinatra croons that "you can't have one without the other," whereas Williams underscores how you invariably do have one without the other.

Indeed, the playwright's work depicts the aforementioned "institute" in a realistic but ultimately negative light. Williams's representation of marriage ties in well to the one presented in the following poem by Lowell titled, "To Speak of Woe That Is in Marriage":

> "The hot night makes us keep our bedroom windows open.
> Our magnolia blossoms. Life begins to happen.
> My hopped up husband drops his home disputes,
> and hits the streets to cruise for prostitutes,
> free-lancing out along the razor's edge.
> This screwball might kill his wife, then take the pledge.
> Oh the monotonous meanness of his lust. . . .
> It's the injustice . . . he is so unjust—
> whiskey-blind, swaggering home at five.
> My only thought is how to keep alive.
> What makes him tick? Each night now I tie
> ten dollars and his car key to my thigh. . . .
> Gored by the climacteric of his want,
> he stalls above me like an elephant." (*Life Studies* 88)

Lowell's confessional poem deals frankly with marital dysfunction, and it links together prostitution and marriage. The alcoholic husband commits adultery by patronizing prostitutes, while his wife desperately attempts to save her troubled marriage by prostituting herself: "Each night now I tie / ten dollars and his car key to my thigh" (88). Judith Harris supports the view of the dramatic speaker's

involvement in a form of prostitution that can best be described as matrimonial whoredom: “Her attempt to control him by offering sexual favors is paradoxical and self-defeating, because she confesses to the reader that she feels ‘gored by the climacteric of his want’ as he stalls above her ‘like an elephant’” (27). Much like Lowell’s poem, Williams’s dramatic representation of dysfunctional marriages that eventually become joyless, sexless, and frequently undermined by adultery gives credence to what Chance in *Sweet Bird of Youth* calls “the Gulf [sic] of misunderstanding” between people (36).

While chapters two and three focus respectively on the key players in the prostitution exchange, the buyers and sellers of sex as well as the intermediaries of the sex trade, this chapter pays close attention to those who morally prostitute themselves for money and status by willingly entering into, or choosing to remain in, the whoredom of a loveless marriage. To focus on the panoply of characters who enter the whoredom of marriage, I will follow a specific-to-general order of presentation instead of a chronological one. By doing so, the most compelling evidence, that is, overt admissions of marrying for money instead of love, will be foregrounded, followed by more subtle acknowledgments of the same phenomenon. This chapter will also show the deleterious consequences of entering into loveless marriages and how such dysfunctional relationships lead to marital infidelity.

In Williams's work, Sinatra's song lyrics "Try, try, try to separate them / It's an illusion," apply less to love and marriage and more to marriage and infidelity, which led critic Stanley Kauffmann to question the playwright's fitness in addressing the issue of marriage in the first place. In his collection of criticisms titled, *Persons of the Drama*, Kauffmann includes his incendiary article, "Homosexual Drama And Its Disguises," which was first published in the *New York Times* on 23 January 1966. In his critique, he takes issue with the dominant post-World War II dramatists' so-called "distortion of marriage and femininity" (293). Kauffmann points out that,

> [t]he principal complaint against homosexual dramatists is well known. Because three of the most successful American playwrights of the last twenty years are (reputed) homosexuals and because their plays often treat of women and marriage, therefore, it is said, postwar American drama presents a badly distorted picture of American women, marriage, and society in general. (291-292)

Kauffmann's criticisms overshoot the mark.

For him to summarily dismiss Williams as an artist incapable of creating masterfully-drawn, complex and memorable female characters (Amanda Wingfield, Blanche DuBois, "Maggie the Cat") or addressing certain social issues because of his sexual orientation is preposterous. Clum agrees:

> The belief that homosexuals know nothing about heterosexual marriage, therefore cannot write "truthfully" about it, is one of the most inane weapons in the heterosexist critic's arsenal. Where, after all, do homosexuals come from? They are raised and learn about marriage through spending their childhood and adolescence in heterosexual households. That seventeen or so

> years of experience should provide some grist for later fiction. (*Acting Gay* 177)

Paller joins Clum in rebuking Kauffmann's blanket statement:

> Gay playwrights, of course, are as expert on the subject of marriage as heterosexual ones: each has had parents and each has observed and absorbed much about that particular relationship. Presumably, to Kauffmann and other straight critics, the only relationships males can have with females are that of mother or wife; friendships seem not to be possible. (180)

Trying unsuccessfully to soften the tone of his journalistic drive-by-shooting of America's leading playwrights, Kauffmann seeks to defend—in the next paragraph—these "reputed" homosexuals (a clear reference to Tennessee Williams, William Inge, and Edward Albee).[55]

He underscores the unavoidable catch-22 they face in addressing heterosexual love:

> If he [the homosexual dramatist] writes of marriage and of other relationships about which he knows or cares little, it is because he has no choice but to masquerade. Both convention and the law demand it. In society the homosexual's life must be discreetly concealed. As material for drama, that life must be even more intensely concealed. If he is to write of his experience, he must invent a two-sex version of the one-sex experience that he really knows. It is we who insist on it, not he. (292)

Savran rejects Kauffmann's allegation of Williams's masquerading: "Throughout his life, it [homosexuality] is Williams's more or less open secret, the one he neither advertised nor tried to hide by marrying or masquerading as a heterosexual—like many of his Broadway and Hollywood confreres" (81). In his interview with the publication *Gay Sunshine* in the early 1970s, Williams

shares his goal as an artist: "I wish to have a broad audience because the major thrust of my work is not sexual orientation, it's social. I'm not about to limit myself to writing about gay people" (qtd. in Spoto 319). Williams's words constitute an obvious attempt to counter persistent accusations that he should have been more involved in the politics of gay liberation. These accusations still persist.

As mentioned in chapter one, both Clum and Sinfield have criticized Williams for not being at the forefront of the gay liberation movement. I find their criticism of Williams to be unfair, and it reeks of revisionist history. I fully agree with Paller's position on the issue, which offers a persuasive defense of the playwright:

> For most of his life, Williams never identified himself as a gay playwright, if only because such an identity did not exist for homosexual men and women of his generation. He never hid his homosexuality from his professional colleagues, but, as was usually the case for gay men born in the first years of the twentieth century, Williams never identified himself primarily as gay. Neither did he write gay plays, that is, plays that sprang from specifically gay experiences and took them as their central concern. Nor did he feel the need to create positive images of gay men anymore than he created such politically based images of any other kind of character. (158)

Whereas Kauffmann is alarmed by the homosexual dramatist's need to "masquerade," Williams is preoccupied with those who masquerade by maintaining sham marriages. His social critique of the institution of marriage exposes "the grotesque charade of 'normality'" performed by married people (Clum, *Acting Gay*, 161).

Such absurd pretenses of marital felicity are rampant in Williams's work, as numerous plays feature characters who overtly admit to having morally prostituted themselves for money by entering into the whoredom of a loveless marriage.[56] Tischler describes such a marital transaction as "a sort of self-destroying, legal prostitution" (*Rebellious Puritan* 75). The following section, which draws attention both to characters who boldly confess to having married for financial security and to those who have more subtly performed the same deed, looks closely at these four works: *Period of Adjustment*, *Orpheus Descending*, *Baby Doll*, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.

Though written during Williams's prolific period, *Period of Adjustment* (1960) remains a little known play among lay readers and a barely discussed one by scholars. One exception is a recent comparative study by Clum titled, "'Period of Adjustment': Marriage in Williams and Christopher Durang," in which he connects the two different writers through a single theme. His analysis of marriage in Williams's *Period of Adjustment* speaks to my argument about the whoredom of loveless marriages.

Rarely produced, the play is an unusual one in the Williams canon. It is a "serious comedy"—Williams's description—about two couples with dissimilar problems, and it concludes with a *deus ex machina* resolution of both marital crises (*Period of Adjustment* 125). According to Clum,

> The reconciliation Williams has offered is, typically, sexual. George and Isabel's marriage is about to be consummated and Ralph is back in bed with the wife he claims is unattractive. Williams believes in his Big Mama's dictum that the problems in a marriage and their solutions occur in bed. Yet this ending is unconvincing because we see no evidence that there is any foundation for the two marriages Williams depicts, either in emotional affinity or even that *sine qua non*, sexual desire. The bond seems to be fear of loneliness, but the characters have already expressed the fact that they still feel lonely even in their marriage. The basic problem is that Williams is trying to present something he really doesn't believe in—lasting, happy heterosexual marriage—yet he is writing for Broadway success in a genre alien to him: domestic comedy. ("'Period of Adjustment'" 172)

I endorse Clum's view on the unsatisfactory ending to the play, but not his Kauffmannesque claim that Williams does not believe in "lasting, happy heterosexual marriage" ("'Period of Adjustment'" 172). Comparable to the standard ending of Hollywood romantic comedies, the denouement of *Period of Adjustment* is quite anomalous for a Williams text, especially in light of the violent endings of Williams's so-called punishment plays of the late 1950s (*Suddenly Last Summer*, *Orpheus Descending*, and *Sweet Bird of Youth*). The play hardly constitutes a disquisition on the institution of marriage, but it serves as an entry point to the discussion of dysfunctional marriages in Williams's work and to the exploration of the internecine relationship between marriage and prostitution.

In *Period of Adjustment*, the incipient problems of newlyweds George and Isabel Haverstick are counterpoised by the deep-seated recriminations of Ralph and Dorothea Bates, who, after five years of marriage, are on the verge

of divorce. The crumbling foundation of the latter couple's marriage is further underscored by several references throughout the play of the shaky ground upon which the Bates live. Built on an underground cavern, the mid-southern suburb of High Point over a cavern is gradually sinking down in it. As the title of the play suggests, both couples are in what Ralph refers to as a "period of adjustment" (138). While the first couple's difficulties stem from incidents surrounding their honeymoon night (during which the aggressive drunken groom is rejected by his terrified virgin bride), the second couple's problems originate from Ralph Bates's decision to enter into a loveless marriage with Dorothea.

Early in the play, Ralph casually mentions to a complete stranger, Isabel, that he morally prostituted himself for money:

> Naw, she [Dorothea] didn't attract me in the beginning. She's one year older'n me and I'm no chicken. But I guess I'm not the only man that would marry the only daughter of an old millionaire with diabetes and gallstones and one kidney. Am I? (144).

Like Ralph, Don in *The Parade* has the opportunity to take advantage of Miriam (and several other wealthy patrons), but she is well aware of his scheme:

> You know what I think you're thinking? I think you're thinking why don't I exploit this rich girl's interest in me: marry her. Be supported by her rich family: cultivate, or pretend to, a taste for the kosher cuisine, for lox and bagels, while I pursue my career without economic pressure and while I also indulge my lech for the silly Dicks of the world. (182)

In act two, Ralph's words take on a more serious import, clearly showing the heavy toll his business agreement with his father-in-law, Mr. McGillicuddy, has taken on his soul:

> How would you like ev'ry time you wint t'bed with your wife, you had to imagine on the bed in the dark that it wasn't her on it with you, in the dark with you, but any one of a list of a thousand or so lovely lays? I done a despicable thing. I married a girl that had no attraction for me excepting I felt sorry for her and her old man's money! I got what I should have gotten: nothing! Just a goddam desk job at Regal Dairy Products, one of her daddy's business operations in Memphis, at eighty-five lousy rutten dollars a week! With my background? In the Air Force? (174)

To perform his marital duty with his wife, Ralph must fantasize about past conquests.

Interestingly, Sinfield points out that, "his most rewarding sexual experiences have been during the War, with prostitutes" (200). Ralph's mournful confession to Isabel of morally prostituting himself brings to mind *Orpheus Descending*, in which Lady unburdens herself of a similar guilt to a total stranger, Val: "—Because I sleep with a son of a bitch [Jabe] who bought me at a fire sale, and not in fifteen years have I had a single good dream, not one—oh!—*Shit* . . . I don't know why I'm—telling a stranger—this. . . ." (266). Proving Ralph's claim in *Period of Adjustment* that "[m]arriage is an economic arrangement in many ways, let's face it, honey," (143), *Orpheus Descending* clearly illustrates the link between marriage and prostitution in Williams's work.

At the beginning of the play, the town gossips, Dolly and Beulah, discuss the wretched state of Jabe and Lady's marriage:

> DOLLY. They got two separate bedrooms which are not even connectin'. At opposite ends of the hall, and everything is so dingy an' dark up there. Y'know what it seemed like to me? A county jail! I swear to goodness it didn't seem to me like a place for white people to live in!—that's the truth . . .
> BEULAH [*darkly*]. Well, I wasn't surprised. Jabe Torrance bought that woman.
> DOLLY. Bought her?
> BEULAH. Yais, he bought her, when she was a girl of eighteen! He bought her and bought her cheap because she'd been thrown over and her heart was broken by that—[*Jerks head toward a passing car, then continues*.]—that Cutrere boy. . . . (229-30)

This exchange of dialogue, which initially may be construed as unproven allegations against the Torrances by mean-spirited gossip-mongers, does indeed render a truthful account of the many circumstances that led to the financial transaction between Jabe and Lady. When her beloved David Cutrere rejected her in favor of a wealthy woman, Lady allowed herself to become a disposable commodity.

In one of the most poignant scenes in the play, Lady confronts her former lover about his leaving her for a rich woman and abandoning their unborn child, which she eventually decided to abort:

> LADY. No, no, I didn't write you no letter about it; I was proud then; I had pride. But I had your child in my body the summer you quit me, that summer they burned my father in his wine garden, and you, you washed your hands clean of any connection with a Dago bootlegger's daughter and—[*Her breathless voice momentarily falters and she makes a fierce gesture as she struggles to speak*.]—took that—society girl

> that—restored your homeplace and give you such—[*Catches breath*.]—well-born children. . . .
> DAVID.—I—didn't know.
> LADY. Well, now you do know, you know now. I carried your child in my body the summer you quit me but I had it cut out of my body, and they cut my heart out with it!
> DAVID.—I—didn't know.
> LADY. I wanted death after that, but death don't come when you *want* it, it comes when you don't want it! I wanted death, then, but I took the next best thing. *You* sold *yourself*. *I* sold *my* self. *You* was bought. *I* was bought. You made whores of us both! (285)

Morally compromised, Lady remains in a discordant marriage strictly for financial security, as the local gossips surmise many people choose to do:

> DOLLY. Beulah Binnings, you make my blood run cold with such a thought! How could she live in marriage twenty years with a man if she knew he'd burned her father up in his wine garden?
> [*Dog bays in distance*.]
> BEULAH. She could live with him in hate. People can live together in hate for a long time, Dolly. Notice their passion for money. I've always noticed when couples don't love each other they develop a passion for money. Haven't you seen that happen? Of course you have. Now there's not many couples that stay devoted forever. Why, some git so they just barely tolerate each other's existence. Isn't that true?
> DOLLY. You couldn't of spoken a truer word if you read it out loud from the Bible!
> BEULAH. Barely tolerate each other's existence, and some don't even do that. You know, Dolly Hamma, I don't think half as many married min have committed suicide in this county as the Coroner says has done so!
> DOLLY [*with voluptuous appreciation of* BEULAH'S *wit*]. You think it's their wives that give them the deep six, honey?
> BEULAH. I don't think so, I know so. Why there's couples that loathe and despise the sight, smell and sound of each other before that round-trip honeymoon ticket is punched at both ends, Dolly.
> DOLLY. I hate to admit it but I can't deny it.
> BEULAH. But they hang on together.
> DOLLY. Yes, they hang on together.
> BEULAH. Year after year after year, accumulating property and

> money, building up wealth and respect and position in the towns they live in and the counties and cities and the churches they go to, belonging to the clubs and so on and so forth and not a soul but them knowin' they have to go wash their hands after touching something the other one just put down! (233-234)

Regardless of the dysfunctional nature of their relationship, the Torrances do indeed "hang on together" (234), forming a legitimate couple in the eyes of society, even though Lady does not have real love for her husband like she did for David.

Unexpectedly, Lady rediscovers real love when she has an affair with the drifter Val. As Tischler cogently observes, "[t]he whoredom of Jabe and Lady's marriage is 'legal' while the decent love between her and Val is 'adulterous'" (*Rebellious Puritan* 239). Tischler's point challenges the notions of respectability of 1950s American society and forces a re-evaluation of different forms of "legitimate" and "illegitimate" love in Williams's work. These two important issues, the whoredom of marriage and the discursive distinction between legitimate and illegitimate love, are addressed specifically in Williams's *Baby Doll*.

Like Ralph in *Period of Adjustment* and Lady in *Orpheus Descending*, the titular heroine in *Baby Doll* confesses to her husband's business rival, Silva, the emotional, sexual, and financial factors that prompted her to marry Archie Lee:

> Well, when I married I wasn't ready for marriage. I was still eighteen, but my daddy was practically on his death bed and wanted to see me took care of before he died. Well, ole Archie Lee had been hanging around like a sick dog for quite some time and . . . the boys are a sorry lot around here. Ask you to the movies and take you to the old rock quarry instead. You have to get out of the car and throw rocks at 'em, oh, I've had some experiences with boys that would curl your hair if I told you—some—experiences which I've had with boys!! But Archie Lee Meighan was an older fellow and in those days, well, his business was better. (83)

I must stress that the impetus behind Baby Doll's father's desire to marry off his daughter is genuine concern for his daughter's well-being. This type of motivation is markedly different from the driving force behind both Mr. Gonzales in *Summer and Smoke*, who nearly orchestrates a marriage of convenience between his daughter and John Buchanan and, as I have previously discussed in chapter three, Boss Finley in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, who succeeded in orchestrating an arranged marriage in a month's time between Dr. Scudder and his daughter.

Like Heavenly, Baby Doll is contracted into a loveless marriage by her father, but unlike her female counterpart, she does hold the upper hand in the transaction because of an agreement between her father and her husband that the marriage not be consummated until she turns twenty.[57] A repository of pent-up sexuality, Archie Lee becomes even more frustrated with the marital arrangement when he is teased about his sexless marriage by townspeople, who, like the gossips in *Orpheus Descending*, know the truth about the "legitimate" married couple: "People know the situation between us. Yestiddy on Front

Street a man yelled to me, 'Hey Archie Lee, has y'wife outgrowed the crib yet??' And three or four others haw-hawed! Public! Humiliation!" (17). In "*Baby Doll*: The Success of Scandal," Palmer discusses the cultural zeitgeist of the 1950s in order to explain the critical reception of the film:

> *Baby Doll* hit America's cinemas with a resounding bang in 1956, and while not the financial and critical success that *A Streetcar Named Desire* had been some six years before, the film proved without a doubt to be the most sensational of Hollywood's adaptations of Tennessee Williams's works. In fact, *Baby Doll* is quite likely the most sensational (we should probably say notorious) Hollywood film released in a decade when, for cultural reasons we will touch on, films could still arouse shock upon release and were often marketed with this affective goal in mind. (29)

Tischler offers the following reasoning as to why the message to be found in Williams's *Baby Doll* offended the *mores* of 1950s society:

> It apparently didn't occur to him [Williams] that *Baby Doll* expressed some unusual thoughts on marriage, to wit: that people may marry to secure themselves legal guardians until they reach the age of consent, that consummation may be delayed for years and may be used as one of the terms of a business contract, and if the marriage partner rouses disgust, it is commendable to take a lover. The ending of *Baby Doll* may be happy, but it is hardly orthodox. (*Rebellious Puritan* 231)[60]

Regardless of Kazan's take on the ambiguous crib scene, I maintain that Baby Doll does take a lover, Silva, who desires to cuckold Archie Lee as revenge for torching his cotton gin.

Finding common ground between three Williams characters, Savran offers the following insight:

> Like so many Williams heroines, she [Miriam from *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel*] is a woman torn between the abusive husband she can't abide and a dark stranger who fascinates her. Like Baby Doll or Lady Torrance, she is a character whose resistance to an oppressive status quo is figured in sexual terms, as a refusal to comply with the dictates of bourgeois morality or to abide in a state of monogamous self-sacrifice. (141)

Tischler's description of some marital arrangements as "whoredoms" (*Rebellious Puritan* passim) and, to reiterate, as "a sort of self-destroying, legal prostitution" (*Rebellious Puritan* 75) broadens the understanding of prostitution in Williams's work. Unlike Ralph, Lady, and Baby Doll, there are marital partners in Williams's work who do not readily admit to strangers the pecuniary motive behind their marriages. This section will provide a detailed analysis of such couples, whose marriages ultimately become joyless, mostly sexless, and undermined by marital infidelity. These unhappy marriages raise the prospect that the wedded partners have indeed prostituted themselves for financial gain or social advancement or both. In terms of marital dysfunction and prostitution, there is no better play to focus on than *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.

The play begins *in medias res*, with the entire Pollitt family gathered at the plantation home of the paterfamilias, Big Daddy, who, unlike the rest of the family, is unaware that he is dying of colon cancer. It is abundantly clear that a battle has been waged for some time now between Big Daddy's oldest son, Gooper, and his two daughters-in-law, Mae (mother of five; married to Gooper) and Margaret (childless; married to Brick). They are fighting over the inheritance of twenty-eight thousand acres of land, and, as the disinterested and

non-combative Brick tells his father, “they’re squaring off on it, each determined to knock off a bigger piece of it than the other whenever you let it go” (80). To influence the dying patriarch, Gooper has prepared legal papers for his father to sign, while his wife has choreographed musical numbers for the children so they can impress their grandfather.

Since the prodigal son Brick has shown no interest in fleecing his father, Margaret tries to light a fire under her husband in order for him to better compete with Gooper and Mae:

> MARGARET. Think of it, Brick, they’ve got five of them and number six is coming. They’ve brought the whole bunch down here like animals to display at a county fair. Why, they have those children doin’ tricks all the time! “Junior, show Big Daddy how you do this, show Big Daddy how you do that, say your little piece fo’ Big Daddy, Sister. Show your dimples, Sugar. Brother, show Big Daddy how you stand on your head!”—It goes on all the time, along with constant little remarks and innuendos about the fact that you and I have not produced any children, are totally childless and therefore totally useless!—Of course it’s comical but it’s also disgusting since it’s so obvious what they’re up to!
> BRICK [*without interest*]. What are they up to, Maggie?
> MARGARET. Why, you know what they’re up to!
> BRICK [*appearing*]. No, I don’t know what they’re up to. [. . .].
> MARGARET. I’ll tell you what they’re up to, boy of mine!—They’re up to cutting you out of your father’s estate. (19-20)

Margaret is particularly suspicious of her in-laws since they have mysteriously altered their traditional vacation plans, opting instead to spend time at Big Daddy’s: “That more than likely explains why their usual summer migration to the coolness of the Great Smokies was passed up this summer in favor of—hustlin’ down ev’ry whipstitch with their whole screamin’ tribe!” (21). It is true

that her in-laws are "hustling" themselves and their children in order to inherit Big Daddy's estate.

However, it is quite ironic for Margaret to incriminate them when she is equally hustling herself, using her sex appeal on the patriarch while fully aware that, "Big Daddy harbors a little unconscious 'lech' fo' me. . . ." (23). That the inheritance of the estate is dependent on "hustling" is somehow completely appropriate, considering the evidence presented earlier in chapter two about how the patriarch must have prostituted himself one way or another to inherit the plantation from the gay couple, Jack Straw and Peter Ochello. Margaret's attempt to get a rise (literally and figuratively) out of her husband is in vain, for Brick refuses to play the game of inheritance and participate in the heterosexist economy by impregnating his wife. Brick is not "scoring" with Margaret, and Gooper and Mae are keeping score: Gooper/Mae 5, Brick/Margaret 0. In a few months, Gooper/Mae will extend their lead to 6-0.

Brick's apathy is due partly to his drinking (read: alcoholism) and partly to his unforgiving of Margaret's sexual indiscretion with his close friend Skipper, who has since died. Following the incident with Skipper, Brick stops sleeping with his wife and urges her to "[t]ake a lover!" (40). Like Archie Lee, who exclaims, "Baby Doll, y'know they's no torture on earth to equal the torture which a cold woman inflicts on a man that she won't let touch her" (16),

Margaret equally qualifies Brick's withholding of sex as an extreme punishment:

> You know, if I thought you would never, never, *never* make love to me again—I would go downstairs to the kitchen and pick out the longest and sharpest knife I could find and stick it straight into my heart, I swear that I would! (30-31).

Nevertheless, she is unwilling to do anything drastic, like taking a lover, "[b]ecause I'm not going to give you any excuse to divorce me for being unfaithful or anything else [. . .]. No, I'd rather stay on this hot tin roof" (50). The conjunction of sex and money is extremely important in this play.

Whereas Gooper and Mae keep procreating and displaying their disgusting collusion and connivance, believing that it will surely lead to the inheritance of Big Daddy's entire estate, Margaret pleads with Brick for a child, thinking it will give them the upper hand in the Big Daddy sweepstakes since the patriarch appears to favor them already. At the end of act one, Margaret girds her loins, adamant about defeating her in-laws and assuring her and Brick's financial future:

> Mae an' Gooper are plannin' to freeze us out of Big Daddy's estate because you drink and I'm childless. But we can defeat that plan. We're *going* to defeat that plan! [. . .].—I'm not tryin' to whitewash my behavior, Christ, no! Brick, I'm not good. I don't know why people have to pretend to be good, nobody's good. The rich or the well-to-do can afford to respect moral patterns, conventional moral patterns, but I could never afford to, yeah, but—I'm honest! Give me credit for just that, will you *please?*—Born poor, raised poor, expect to die poor unless I manage to get us something out of what Big Daddy leaves when he dies of cancer! (53, 59-60)

Even though she plays the game of inheritance in an effort not to return to her impoverished life, Margaret is undoubtedly physically attracted to, and emotionally invested in, her husband.

Glenn Thomas Embrey does not share my opinion:

> While it is clear that Williams expects the audience to understand that she loves Brick very much, he does not present her love very attractively or convincingly. She seems primarily concerned with sex rather than love. Many of the remarks she directs toward Brick convey how sexually frustrated she is and how sexually attractive she finds him. (157)

I disagree with Embrey, as I hold a sympathetic and positive view of Margaret because she does have genuine love for Brick. Yes, Margaret proclaims that she is willing to prostitute herself for money, but I cannot place her on the same moral plane as the "caricatures" (Tischler, *Rebellious Puritan*, 202), Gooper and Mae, whom I rank among the most despicable characters in the Williams canon. The more Margaret rehashes the past as a way to win over her husband the more she alienates him. Her frustration leads her to lash out at Brick: "I'm not living with you. We occupy the same cage" (35). With dogged persistence, Margaret takes a bold initiative and tells a bald-faced lie to the Pollitt family: "Brick and I are going to–*have a child!*" (158). She maintains the ruse throughout Gooper and Mae's vigorous cross-examination of her (158-62).

Alone with Brick at the end of the play, Margaret strikes a deal with her husband in order to save face with her relatives: "And so tonight we're going to

make the lie true, and when that's done, I'll bring the liquor back here and we'll get drunk together, here, tonight, in this place that death has come into. . . ." (165). When the curtain falls in the Broadway, Kazan-inspired conclusion or the movie ends (in the case of Richard Brooks's film adaptation), one naturally assumes that they will consummate the deal. By producing an offspring and finally participating in the heterosexist economy, the couple will most likely be rewarded with the spoils of inheritance. But, it remains highly doubtful that such "a compromised version of marriage and procreation" will lead to a lasting reconciliation between Brick and Margaret (Clum, *Acting Gay*, 162).

The only example of marital felicity that Clum identifies in the play is "the happy, ideal 'marriage' of Jack Straw and Peter Ochello" ("'Something Cloudy'" 163). To that point, the closeness of the couple is suggested in stage notes by Williams, who indicates that the homosexual couple's former bedroom "must evoke some ghosts; it is gently and poetically haunted by a relationship that must have involved a tenderness which was uncommon" (15). Given the political climate of the Eisenhower era, Williams's description of this kind of uncommon tenderness between same-sex characters is, according to Dean Shackelford, groundbreaking and revolutionary:

> Contrary to Clum's misreading in his article on homophobic discourse that attacks Williams for allowing Brick's anti-gay rhetoric to receive the emphasis, Williams mentions the unspeakable: the existence of a monogamous gay couple and overt language to describe and validate the love of homosexuals for one another. To my knowledge no other American play of the 1950s acknowledges the possibility that two men share a bed

> and no other American play before this time uses the rhetoric of oppression and the oppressed to describe the social predicament of homosexuals. Social conventions are the problem, not gay men or homosexuality. (112)

With the exception of the Ochello-Straw partnership, Clum argues that no couple in the play, whether it be Margaret and Brick, Gooper and Mae, or Big Daddy and Big Mama, is engaged in a loving marriage:

> *Love* is not an operative term for the men in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. It is a word used only by Maggie and Big Mama; the men are left to wonder: "Wouldn't it be funny if it were true?" (pp. 80, 173). Not being able to accept the love of women, the men cannot accept the unspoken notion of sexual love between men. Nor can Williams convincingly offer them that option. Heterosexual marriage, however, is either the hostility of Big Daddy toward the overbearing Big Mama or the grotesque charade of "normality" performed by Gooper and Mae. (*Acting Gay* 160-161)

I agree with Clum's assessment of Gooper and Mae's loveless relationship. After all, Mae's deep-seated hatred of her brother-in-law and his wife is money-driven, as is her marriage to Gooper, for whom she displays no love or respect. When Margaret cattily (pun intended) declares that, "Y'know—your brother Gooper still cherishes the illusion he took a giant step up on the social ladder when he married Miss Mae Flynn of the Memphis Flynns," she provides the real motive behind Gooper's courtship of, and eventual marriage to, Mae (25). Like Gooper and Mae, Big Daddy and Big Mama do not form a loving couple. She nags him, and he berates her. He harbors deep-rooted resentment, so much so that he callously disregards her plaintive wailing that "*[i]n all these years you never believed that I loved you??*" (78). When Big Mama laments, "*And I did, I did so much, I did love you!*—I even loved your hate and your hardness,

Big Daddy!" (78), her assertion echoes the gossiping Beulah's earlier sentiment in *Orpheus Descending* about how "[p]eople can live together in hate for a long time" (233). The underlying truth for Big Daddy is that, like Mae did with his son Gooper, Big Mama only married him for his money and status.

Discussing his wife, Big Daddy claims that, "I haven't been able to stand the sight, sound, or smell of that woman for forty years now!—even when I *laid* her!—regular as a piston. . . ." (108). His words confirm that his sexual relationship with Big Mama has not translated into a more meaningful emotional bond. In that sense, he is like Brick, who tells him about his distant rapport with his wife: "Y'know, I think that Maggie had always felt sort of left out because she and me never got any closer together than two people just get in bed, which is not much closer than two cats on a—fence humping. . . ." (123). The characters in this play, like so many others in Williams's work, are less preoccupied with their dysfunctional marriages than they are with their financial arrangements.

Indeed, they are perfectly willing to sacrifice love, not to mention their dignity, for what Margaret hypocritically calls "the most disgusting and sordid reason on earth, and I know what it is! It's *avarice, avarice, greed, greed!* (150-1). Several examples of such greed and avarice come to mind, most notably in the case of Flora in *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*, who freely admits that her "first three marriages were into Dun and Bradstreet's and the

Social Register, both!" (9), and that she found true love with her "*fourth* husband, the *last* one, the one I married for love" (10).

For most Williams couples, their loveless marriage is one that is often sexually joyless, sometimes sexless, and eventually undermined by marital infidelity. Pointing to Margaret and Brick's marital bed, previously shared by Straw and Ochello, Big Mama tells her daughter-in-law that, "[w]hen a marriage goes on the rocks, the rocks are *there*, right *there!*" (48). The overbearing matriarch should know about rocky relationships, as her husband no longer sleeps with her. Under the false impression that he has received a clean bill of health, Big Daddy tells Brick how he regrets having squandered so much of his sexual potency with his wife and vows to satisfy his sexual appetite with a substitute for Big Mama:

> I'm going to pick me a choice one, I don't care how much she costs, I'll smother her in—minks! Ha ha! I'll strip her naked and smother her in minks and choke her with diamonds! Ha ha! I'll strip her naked and choke her with diamonds and smother her with minks and hump her from hell to breakfast. (96)

Big Daddy's, Margaret's, and Brick's attitudes towards marriage and infidelity run counter to the cultural *mores* of 1950s American society. Williams's depiction of the Pollitt family is not an idealized portrait of the nuclear family; as a result, it challenges the decade's revival of the cult of domesticity. Savran explains this return to traditional values:

> The ideology of familialism and the theory of "sex roles" conceived the distinction between men and women as a binary opposition that set the aggressive, "go-getting" businessman and

> father against the "warm, giving," and "expressive" housewife and mother whose responsibility it was to embrace domesticity and contain her sexuality. (8)

This domestic revival was fuelled by suburban development and the burgeoning medium of television.

In her article, "The Suburban Home Companion: Television and the Neighborhood Ideal in Postwar America," Lynn Spigel claims that, "[i]t is a truism among cultural historians and media scholars that television's growth after World War II was part of a general return to family values" (186). Spigel describes the characteristics of, and the politics behind, suburban development. She explains how television helped to foster a deep sense of community amongst suburban dwellers of the 1950s:

> The opening credits of fifties sitcoms further encouraged audiences to perceive television's families as neighbors, linked through electrical wires to their own homes. Typically, the credit sequences depicted families exiting their front doors (*Donna Reed*, *Leave It to Beaver*, *Make Room for Daddy*, *Ozzie and Harriet*) or greeting viewers in a neighborly fashion by leaning out their windows (*The Goldbergs*), and the programs often used establishing shots of the surrounding neighborhoods (*Father Knows Best*, *Ozzie and Harriet*, *Leave It to Beaver*, *Make Room for Daddy*, *The Goldbergs*). (203)

That the Pollitts reject the wholesome family values depicted on the sanitized classic sitcoms of the mid-1950s, such as *Leave It To Beaver*, *Father Knows Best*, and *The Donna Reed Show*, is clear, for Maggie has already tried to commit adultery (with Skipper), Brick implores her once again to "[t]ake a lover" (40), and Big Daddy vows to commit adultery with the best woman his

money can buy. This has prompted Savran to conclude that the Williams canon not only reflects but also subverts representations of domestic realism:

> Williams's work, on the other hand, challenges these same [hegemonic] constructions by offering subtly subversive models of gender and sexuality, that I believe, suggest a way beyond those "sex roles" that continue to exercise a powerful hold over the American domestic *imaginaire*. (9)

Though involved in joyless and sexless marriages for several years, the Pollitt men have not committed adultery as Margaret has done.

This is a pattern that repeats in other works by Williams, in which wives in sexless or dysfunctional marriages are sexually proactive and have adulterous affairs. In "A Gallery of Witches," Tischler writes about this type of woman:

> The sexually aggressive female—an anathema to the Southerner—fascinates Williams. Usually her attack is on the younger male, though Maggie and Maxine are priestesses of Venus who are willing to consider males of any age. Maggie dominates Brick's friend Skip sexually and flirts with Big Daddy. Maxine (*Night of the Iguana*) moves easily from aging husband to beach boys to Shannon. She is a more highly developed and interesting version of the tough but motherly whore shown in Myrtle of the seven descents. The water imagery of *Night of the Iguana* echoes her role as womb and tomb. Her tropical retreat is the end of Shannon's world, where he can return to the earth mother, dance his final perverse, saintly dance, and die erotically in her motherly embrace. (505)

Like Margaret and Maxine, women have the proclivity to philander in Williams's work. These women provide a contrast to the well-known womanizing male characters of American Drama, such as Willie Loman in

Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and James Tyrone Sr. in O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*.

According to Meg Bishop in Williams's *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*, Mrs. Stone is accused by the Contessa of being "nothing more than a harlot who had struck it rich" (48). In the film adaptation of the novel, Meg is more explicit, contending that the actress married Tom Stone, twenty years her senior, for his millions. The following passage from the novel shows the extent to which Mrs. Stone pays a price for having married for financial security or social advancement or both, as her marriage undergoes a serious period of adjustment:

> Their marriage, in its beginning, had come very close to disaster because of a sexual coldness, amounting to aversion, on her part, and a sexual awkwardness, amounting to impotence, on his. If one night, nearly twenty-five years ago, he had not broken down and wept on her breast like a baby, and in this way transferred his position from that of unsuccessful master to that of pathetic dependent, the marriage would have cracked up. But the pathos had succeeded where the desire had not. *She had taken him into her arms with a sudden tenderness and the marriage had then suddenly been set right or at least had been salvaged* (my italics). Through his inadequacy Mr. Stone had allowed them both to discover what both had really wanted, she an adult child and he a living and young and adorable mother. (81-82)

The italicized part of the previous quotation is reminiscent of a similar marital situation in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.

At the end of act three of the New York production of the play, Margaret tells Brick, "Oh, you weak, beautiful people who give up with such

grace. What you need is someone to take hold of you—gently, with love, and hand your life back to you, like something gold you let go of—and I can!" (215). The earlier excerpt from Williams's novel deals with the motivating factors (sexual coldness, aversion, sexual awkwardness, impotence) that lead so many marital partners in Williams's work to commit adultery. As Tischler explains, "[s]ex, it would seem, is the answer to the world's problems, but is not usually tied to marriage" (*Rebellious Puritan* 292). Such is the case with Mrs. Stone, who tells her husband about her extramarital affair with a fellow thespian. Strangely, she is easily forgiven by Mr. Stone due to his self-acknowledged sexual incompetence:

> She told him about the incident in the dressing-room, and that evening he said to her, I know that I haven't ever made love to you really satisfactorily. For it was, of course, the sexual side of the incident that had impressed him, not the far more significant question of ethics. Mr. Stone gave her absolution only for the carnal incident; but she pretended, with him, that that was all that there really was to understand and forgive, and she, in return, had reassured him, and with considerable truth, that their own relations had been and still were what she desired, that the lightning-like episode came from no cloud of latent dissatisfaction. And on the night that followed, it was she that took comfort from him, for the role of child and mother is curiously interchangeable when it becomes the basis of an adult marriage. The marriage of the Stones was haunted by a mysterious loneliness. All substitute relationships are haunted by something like that. (85)

Like Mrs. Stone, other Williams women—who are either disgusted by, or disappointed with, their husband's sexual incompatibility, incompetence, or impotence—have had adulterous affairs.

Lady in *Orpheus Descending*, Maxine in *The Night of the Iguana*, and the landlady in Williams's short story, "The Malediction," are all guilty of infidelity. Lady's marital plight is certainly more dramatic than Mrs. Stone's. In this passage, Lady expresses not only her downright disgust with sexual relations with her husband but also the salvific nature of her affair with Val:

> Ask me how it felt to be coupled with death up there, and I can tell you. My skin crawled when he touched me. But I endured it. I guess my heart knew that somebody must be coming to take me out of this hell! You did. You came. Now look at me! I'm alive once more! (333)

Unlike Lady, whose adultery becomes a restorative experience, some married women are not redeemed by their infidelity, but they experience sexual fulfillment that can no longer be provided by their husbands.

As mentioned in chapter two, the Mexican divers in *The Night of the Iguana*, Pedro and Pancho, provide sexual release to their employer, Maxine, *before* and after her husband's death (270). A dear friend of Fred Faulk's, Shannon is puzzled that Maxine does not appear to be "inconsolable" about his death (257).[61] The recent widow proffers this excuse: "Fred was an old man, baby. Ten years older'n me. We hadn't had sex together in. . . ." (257). In this respect, Maxine's sexless marriage can be compared to the landlady's in "The Malediction." Instead of choosing divers, the landlady selects some of her tenants to meet her sexual needs after her husband's accident renders him impotent (*CS* 155). Maxine and the landlady justify their marital infidelities

because of their husbands' inability "to cut the mustard," to borrow Miss Lucy's expression in *Sweet Bird of Youth* (65).

Invariably, stagnant and joyless marriages lead to abandonment or to adultery. In *The Glass Menagerie*, for example, the Wingfield marriage is undone by abandonment, as Amanda is deserted by "a telephone man who fell in love with long distances; he gave up his job with the telephone company and skipped the light fantastic out of town . . ." (145). In some cases, the sexual incompatibility or incompetence of marital partners is to blame. In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the marital abandonment concerning the completely mismatched couple of Blanche and Allan Gray is caused by adultery. When Blanche discovers her closeted husband in a compromising position with an older male friend, she reacts in such a revolted manner that she remains deeply guilt-ridden about the incident that most likely contributed to Allan's suicide (354-355).

Other ill-suited couples appear in several of Williams's lesser-known works, either in the apprentice plays recently collected in *Mister Paradise and Other Plays by Tennessee Williams* or in the late-career plays published in *The Traveling Companion and Other Plays*. In *Summer at the Lake*, Mrs. Fenway suspects her husband's infidelity, telling her son, "I'll lay you ten to one he's keeping a mistress" (58) and later adding, "You'll have to start taking on some responsibilities now that your father's cut loose and gotten involved more than

likely with some cheap woman! (62). In *The Fat Man's Wife*, which John Lahr calls, "a jejune sketch that meditates on unfulfilled desire" (107), a young man, Dennis Merriweather, pleads with a middle-aged woman, Vera Cartwright, to leave her unfaithful husband, Joe, who has been having an affair with an unnamed blonde. Mrs. Cartwright is tempted to escape, but ultimately decides to stay with her adulterous husband. Resigning herself to a loveless marriage, Vera tells her husband that they will need to acclimate to the fact that they will be "[s]aying unimportant things to each other for the rest of our lives!!" (141).

In *The Pink Bedroom*, another adulterous husband, Arthur, is put under pressure to leave his wife by his long-time mistress, Helen. The mistress and the wife engage in a war of words, accusing each other of immorality. The mistress attacks the wife's character by calling her a "brainless society-chaser" (110), thus questioning the integrity of her marriage. The mistress, who tells the husband, "Am I to be blamed that you hitched yourself up with a woman who's made a hell of your life?" (110), considers herself to be in a *de facto* marriage with him:

> WOMAN. Love was your need and I gave it, not just an affair, but a real deep spiritual love. I gave it all of that time and still do *now* in spite of your *lies* and your—
> MAN. —Pink
> WOMAN. Pushing me back in your life! If that wasn't marriage there's no such a thing as a marriage and what dogs do is the same as human beings! (114)

The mistress's testimony of deep affection is persuasive, that is, until the ironic denouement of the play, when one discovers that she is cheating on the husband.

The mistress's situation is congruent with Woman in *The Day on Which a Man Dies*, who also cheats on her partner. In this play, Woman expresses the same frustration as the main character in *The Pink Bedroom* about Man's inability to leave his wife, breaking the fourth wall with the following lines: "I've got no legal position. Goddamn atheist but claims he can't get divorced from his wife because he's Catholic and she's insane. —I have no legal position after eleven years with him" (32). Like her counterpart, she also reproaches Man for using her sexually throughout their relationship: "How do you think it's been for me for eleven years, having no hold on you but the sexual act and knowing that that was the only hold I had on you?" (27). Because of the purely sexual liaison, Woman views herself as a prostitute:

> Being your whore for eleven years hasn't brutalized my nature in your opinion, or don't I count in your opinion? Artist you, whore me! Artist is a dirty word to me, now, a dirtier word than whore is. (23)

Later, Man explains his non-emotional investment in her with the following line: "I needed love, understanding: the tenderness of a woman, not the tricks of a whore" (29). Of course, there are counter-examples to the notion of dysfunctional (*de facto*) marriages in Williams's *oeuvre*.

Depictions of loving, sexually satisfying, and even love-stoned marriages occur in the short story, "The Kingdom of Earth," *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and *The Rose Tattoo*. Nevertheless, satisfied marital partners in these works do commit adultery, and, in some cases, the affairs involve in-laws. In "The Kingdom of Earth," Lot meets the prostitute, Myrtle, and marries her, which raises the ire of his brother, Chicken: "It was a real bitch trick to marry a dying man which she must have known Lot was" (*CS* 389). Unlike previous examples of characters willingly entering loveless marriages, Myrtle professes to love her husband. She tries to defend herself from her brother-in-law's accusation that she is nothing but a gold-digger by describing the circumstances that led up to her and Lot's whirl-wind marriage:

> I picked up Lot on a street. He looked like a kid. Sort of thin and pitiful-looking. It touched me the way that he laid on me like a baby. He seemed so lonesome, and it's the truth that I loved him. He slept in my arms just like a baby would and when he woke up he said would I come home with him and we'd be married. At first I laughed. It seemed ridiculous to me. But then I thought, Oh, well, as the fellow says, they's a hell of a lot more to it, this business of sex, than a couple of people jumping up and down on each other's eggs. So I said yes, and we set out the very next morning . . . . (*CS* 396)

Myrtle's tender story of taking Lot into her arms recalls earlier accounts of affection and maternal love by both Mrs. Stone and Margaret for their husbands.

Though she loves her husband and continues to have carnal relations with him, Myrtle feels compelled to begin an adulterous affair with Chicken.

She tells her brother-in-law, "[t]he minute I laid eyes on you, the first glance I look at that big powerful body, I said to myself, Oh, oh, your goose is cooked, Myrtle!" (*CS* 396). This statement bears an eerie similarity to Blanche's prophetic pronouncement to Mitch in *A Streetcar Named Desire* that her punishment will be meted out by her own brother-in-law: "The first time I laid eyes on him I thought to myself, that man is my executioner! That man will destroy me, unless—" (351). This is not the only correspondence between the two works. In both cases, the sex act is initiated by someone who is motivated partly by lust and partly by revenge. Chicken is fully conscious of his reasons for inciting a more-than-willing Myrtle to commit adultery:

> I don't think I ever in all my life looked forward to anything so much as I did to that woman coming up to bed with me. Of course, I was horny and crazy to get my gun off, but it wasn't just that. It was partly the fact that she was Lot's wife and the place had gone to Lot and he was the son by marriage and I was just a wood's colt that people accused of having some nigger blood. (*CS* 397)

Likewise, Stanley's animus towards Blanche is fuelled initially by revenge and later by lust.

Although his wife is not interested in delving into the loss of her family home, Belle Reve, Stanley wants to know if he and Stella have been "swindled" (273) of their share of the Mississippi estate. He cross-examines his sister-in-law, but she defends herself by providing him with all the necessary paperwork and commenting that,

> [t]here are thousands of papers, stretching back over hundreds of years, affecting Belle Reve as, piece by piece, our improvident grandfathers and father and uncles and brothers exchanged the lands for their epic fornications—to put it plainly! (284)

Having built a strong case against his sister-in-law, Stanley prosecutes her in front of Stella. He reveals Blanche's prostitution at the Flamingo Hotel and her interference with a minor that led to her dismissal as a teacher (358-363).

Stanley and Blanche battle like two card sharps, and the comparison is appropriate for a play that was initially titled, "The Poker Night." Stanley's victory over Blanche can best be explained with the parlance of poker: Stanley has a poker face, holds a premium starting hand, and raises the ante. Blanche attempts a big bluff, but her hand, built on a foundation of lies, is as vulnerable as a house of cards. After he calls Blanche's bluff and displays his winning hand, Stanley figures out a lust-based way to cash in his chips: "Come to think of it—maybe you wouldn't be bad to—interfere with . . ." (401). The (sexual) tension keeps mounting between the two diametrically-opposed personalities, and before raping Blanche, Stanley echoes her earlier presentiment of suffering retribution at his hands when he exclaims, "Tiger—tiger! Drop the bottle-top! Drop it! We've had this date with each other from the beginning!" (402). As Adler explains, the rape scene occurs simultaneously to a crime perpetrated on another streetwalker:

> During the rape, through the transparent back wall of the apartment, the audience sees a streetwalker being pursued by a drunk she has rolled; she, in turn, loses her "sequined bag" to a thief. For having threatened Stanley's little domain, Blanche

> becomes another object to be used and discarded. (*"Streetcar"* 53)

In Williams's telling juxtaposition of both scenes, one prostitute loses her sequined bag, while the other, Blanche, loses her bag of tricks.

Though both Myrtle and Stanley claim to be involved in loving marriages, their infidelities have disastrous consequences: a cuckolded and heart-broken Lot loses his life, and a violated Blanche loses her mind. At the end of "The Kingdom of Earth," Chicken and Myrtle have gotten married and are expecting a child. *A Streetcar Named Desire* concludes with Blanche's exit to an asylum and a likely reuniting of Stella and Stanley with their new child. The denouement of the play, which is much different from that of the film adaptation, sees the love-stoned Stella setting out with her husband for likely make-up sex and ultimately forgiving him for interfering with Blanche.[58]

This possible absolution recalls a similar forgiveness at the end of scene three, which leads to a prolonged discussion between the sisters in scene four about how Stella can easily overlook Stanley's occasional brutality. Stella proffers a sexually suggestive explanation: "But there are things that happen between a man and a woman in the dark—that sort of make everything else seem—unimportant" (321). Indeed, Stanley's ability to melt his wife's defenses is obvious, and his seductive line in the movie version, "Honey, it's gonna be so sweet when we get them colored lights going," recalls Val's boast in *The*

Fugitive Kind, that "they say a woman can burn a man down, but I can burn a woman down."[59] Another intertextual similarity between the two films is that Marlon Brando plays the smoldering characters of Stanley and Val.[62] Like Stanley and Val, the gigolo Chance displays the same sexual bravado:

> Princess, the great difference between people in this world is not between the rich and the poor or the good and the evil, the biggest of all differences in this world is between the ones that had or have pleasure in love and those that haven't and hadn't any pleasure in love, but just watched it with envy, sick envy. The spectators and the performers. I don't mean just ordinary pleasure or the kind you can buy, I mean great pleasure, and nothing that's happened to me or to Heavenly since can cancel out the many long nights without sleep when we gave each other such pleasure in love as very few people can look back on in their lives . . . (50)

Stanley and Stella's claims to passionate marital lovemaking bring to mind similar assertions by the main character in *The Rose Tattoo*.

Fervently, Serafina delle Rose sings the praises of her satisfying sex life with her husband, Rosario: "We had love together every night of the week, we never skipped one, from the night we was married till the night he was killed in his fruit truck on that road there!" (310). Throughout the play, the widow of three years extols the virtues of her and her husband's passionate marriage before his untimely death. Just as narcotized as Stella, Serafina tells the neighboring women Bessie and Flora that "[a]t night I sit here and I'm satisfied to remember, because I had the best.—Not the third best and not the second best, but the *first* best, the *only* best!" (311). About Serafina's flights of fancy, Jeanne M. McGlinn offers the following assessment:

> To her, married sex is the ultimate experience, "a religion," and she is proud of her adherence to its values: faithfulness, chastity, and purity. But the idea that making love had consecrated her and her husband is an illusion because Rosario was not faithful, and there is no indication that he even loved Serafina. (517)

The aforementioned neighbors barely tolerate the widow as she reminisces, but when she asserts that, "I'm satisfied to remember the love of a man that was mine—*only mine!* Never touched by the hand of *nobody! Nobody* but *me!*—Just me!" (312), they promptly challenge her rosy (pun intended) picture of holy matrimony. Like Dolly and Beulah in *Orpheus Descending*, Bessie and Flora's sole purpose is exposition, and they do provide incriminating evidence regarding the delle Rose marriage. Emphatically, they discredit Serafina's claim of marital monogamy:

> FLORA [*crossing to the open door*]. Never touched by nobody?
> SERAFINA [*with fierce pride*]. Never nobody but me!
> FLORA. *I* know somebody that could a tale unfold! And not so far from here neither. Not no further than the Square Roof is, that place on Esplanade!
> BESSIE. Estelle Hohengarten![63]
> FLORA. Estelle Hohengarten—the blackjack dealer from Texas!
> BESSIE. Get into your blouse and let's go!
> FLORA. Everybody's known it but Serafina. I'm just telling the facts that come out at the inquest while she was in bed with her eyes shut tight and the sheet pulled over her head like a female ostrich! Tie this damn thing on me! It was a romance, not just a fly-by-night thing, but a steady affair that went on for more than a year. (312-313)

Though devastated by the revelation of Rosario's infidelity, Serafina refuses to entertain the notion and accuses the women of lying.

This resistance to the truth links Serafina with Stella, who also refuses to believe the truth about her husband. In the end, Stella rejects her sister's claim that Stanley raped her. When she tells her friend Eunice, "I couldn't believe her story and go on living with Stanley" (405), Stella reduces Blanche's serious charge to a simple delusion in order to maintain the illusion of her unadulterated marriage with Stanley. Devlin and Tischler offer this precision about the play: "The 'exposition' between Stella and Eunice in Scene Eleven of *Streetcar* reveals that Stella has settled for the self-preserving lie, denying that Stanley raped her sister (*Selected Letters* 124n). Saddik raises an interesting point that,

> [a]s characters, Stanley and Blanche are certainly not simple representations of good and evil. In fact, if one were to try and impose these labels upon the characters it would be difficult to know which label to assign to which protagonist. (*The Politics of Reputation* 67)

I agree with her, as it is rather difficult to ascribe moral superiority to any of the principal characters in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

This begs the question: where should one place Stella on the moral continuum of good and evil? I reject Bauer-Briski's claim that Stella is "the most moral person in the DuBois family," as Stella ultimately sells out a family member to salvage her marriage (69). Clum delivers this condemnation of the younger DuBois sister:

> Ostensibly Stella and conventional heterosexual marriage win, but only through Stella's denying the truth about Stanley's rape of Blanche. For all Stanley's macho posturing, it is Stella's

> denial that sends Blanche to the asylum, not Stanley's rape. ("The Sacrificial Stud" 129)

Stella's forgiveness of Stanley for possibly interfering with her sister can be compared to her friend Eunice's forgiveness of her husband Steve, whom she suspects of adultery. According to Bauer-Briski,

> it is never disclosed whether or not Steve really cheated on Eunice with a prostitute at the Four Deuces, but since Eunice insists on having seen him chase her around the balcony, her accusation may be true. Thus it is an anticipation of Stanley's betrayal of Stella with Blanche, who, of course, is also a prostitute. Like for Steve, Stanley's unfaithful act will not have any consequences for his marriage, since Stella is bound to forgive him as quickly as Eunice forgives Steve. Accordingly, they will be happy together as soon as they are alone again. (76)

Stella decides to stay with Stanley, in part for economic reasons and in part for lust-based ones. Adler argues that, "[w]hile Stella may be there *for* Stanley's use as a sex object in the future, she indicates she will never again be totally *with* him as energetic lover" (*"Streetcar"* 64). Kleb further substantiates Adler's point:

> It is more implied than stated, and yet (if Stella's reticence, her lack of response to Stanley's move, is played) it points to a sense that something in their relationship has been fundamentally redefined or lost. And of course it has: Blanche has come and gone, and she has not, after all, burned down the house, but she has changed this world. (40)

Blanche is unable to establish such an arrangement with anyone, whether it be with Shep Huntleigh or Harold "Mitch" Mitchell.

Her constant shape-shifting, a female performance due to a woman's relegation to the private sphere, leads her nowhere. Adler provides this rationale for Blanche's failure:

> Yet Blanche remains prisoner to the traditional notions about women of the old cavalier South: economic dependency was the order of the day, and so women like Blanche were ill-equipped to survive in a changing world by any means *except* physical attractiveness. (*"Streetcar"* 40)

Blanche is at the end of the road, no longer able to depend on "the kindness of strangers" or the generosity of family members for survival. Blanche's plight as an unmarried woman brings to mind Amanda's discourse in *The Glass Menagerie* about what awaits her and her daughter if Laura does not manage to seal the deal with a gentleman caller:

> What is there left but dependency all our lives? I know so well what becomes of unmarried women who aren't prepared to occupy a position. I've seen such pitiful cases in the South—barely tolerated spinsters living upon the grudging patronage of sister's husband or brother's wife!—stuck away in some little mousetrap of a room—encouraged by one in-law to visit another—little birdlike women without any nest—eating the crust of humility all their life! Is that the future that we've mapped out for ourselves? I swear it's the only alternative I can think of! (156)

Besides Amanda and Laura, Aunt Rose Comfort McCorkle in *Baby Doll* and Aunt Nonnie in *Sweet Bird of Youth* serve as examples of those who must eat humble pie, surviving on the aforementioned "crust of humility" (156).

Archie Lee's mounting frustration of living with, and providing for, Baby Doll's Aunt Rose leads to this tense exchange at the end of the play:

> ARCHIE. Set down here. I want to ask you a question. [AUNT ROSE *sits down slowly and stiffly, all atremble.*] What sort of—plans have you made?
> AUNT ROSE. Plans, Archie Lee? What sort of plans do you mean?
> ARCHIE. Plans for the future! [. . .]. Now, Aunt Rose. You been here since August and that's a mighty long stay. Now, it's my honest opinion that you're in need of a rest. You been cookin' around here and cookin' around there for how long now? How long have you been cookin' around people's houses?
> AUNT ROSE [Barely able to speak]. I've helped out my—relatives, my—folks—whenever they—*needed me to!* I was always—*invited!* Sometimes—*begged* to come! When *babies* were expected or when somebody was *sick,* they called Aunt Rose, and Aunt Rose was always—ready. . . . Nobody *ever* had to—*put me—out!* —If you—gentlemen will excuse me from the table—I will pack my things! (116-7)

Aunt Rose's injured pride prompts her to leave her in-law's place, unlike Aunt Nonnie, who lives on as a dependent in her brother-in-law's house. Her living situation becomes precarious upon Chance's return to his hometown. A fervid supporter of Chance in his pursuit of Heavenly, Aunt Nonnie continues to defend the revenant, thus drawing the ire of Boss Finley:

> BOSS. You're like your dead sister, Nonnie, gullible as my wife was. You don't know a lie if you bump into it on a street in the daytime. Now you go out there and tell Heavenly I want to see her.
> NONNIE. Tom, she's not well enough to—
> BOSS. Nonnie, you got a whole lot to answer for.
> NONNIE. Have I?
> BOSS. Yes, you sure have, Nonnie. You favored Chance Wayne, encouraged, aided and abetted him in his corruption of Heavenly over a long, long time. You go get her. You sure do have lot to answer for. You got a helluva lot to answer for.
> NONNIE. I remember when Chance was the finest, nicest, sweetest boy in St. Cloud, and he stayed that way till you, till you—
> BOSS. Go get her, go get her! [*She leaves by the far side of the terrace. After a moment her voice is heard calling,* "HEAVENLY? HEAVENLY?"] It's a curious thing, a mighty

> peculiar thing, how often a man that rises to high public office is drug back down by every soul he harbors under his roof. He harbors them under his roof, and they pull the roof down on him. Every last living one of them. (62-63)

Considering the political wheel's ranting and raving, Aunt Nonnie must tread lightly with Boss Finley; otherwise, she will be sent away by her brother-in-law, albeit in a less traumatizing way than Blanche.

Blanche's desolation is comparable to that of several other Williams characters. However, instead of descending into madness like Blanche, Dorothea, Shannon, and Marguerite voluntarily enter the whoredom of a mutually agreed-upon arrangement with their respective partners, Buddy, Maxine, and Jacques Casanova. The heart-broken Dorothea considers marriage to Buddy as her last resort after discovering the upcoming nuptials of her real love, T. Ralph Ellis. Noticing her friend Dorothea's vulnerable state, Helena Brookmire issues the following warning: "Sometimes when a girl is on the rebound from a disappointing infatuation, she will leap without looking into the most improbable sort of—liaison—" (180). Saddik offers this comment on the main character's likely decision to enter into a loveless marriage:

> Remaining without a man is not an alternative for Dorothea since she believes that "I've got to find a partner in life, or my life will have no meaning" (8: 133), and so the play ends with Dorothea going off to meet Bodey and Buddy for a picnic at Creve Coeur ("heartbreak") park in order to consider the option of a union with him. (*The Politics of Reputation* 129)

A similar option for a potential union is discussed in *The Night of the Iguana*.

Early in act three of the play, Maxine negotiates a business deal with Shannon that would basically guarantee a companionable but compromised relationship:

> I know the difference between loving someone and just sleeping with someone—even I know about that. [*He starts to rise*.] We've both reached a point where we've got to settle for something that works for us in our lives—even if it isn't on the highest kind of level. (329)

Much like the denouement in *A Lovely Day for Creve Coeur*, the resolution of the play involves a certain union. Alluding to Maxine and Shannon's decision to enter into a mutually beneficial arrangement, Ingrid Rogers contends that in Williams's work, one

> frequent use of sex in an exploitive way is applying it exclusively as a means of getting ahead in society. With some couples the exploitation is mutual. In the arrangement between Maxine and Shannon, Shannon gains room and board for his sexual services while Maxine sees a liaison with Shannon as a way to regain a reputation as an honorable woman. (64)

In their analysis of the film adaptation of *The Night of the Iguana*, Palmer and Bray mention the following:

> At the end, the ethereal Hannah is bravely confirmed in her self-containment, while Maxine and Shannon agree to the exploration of a life together (in a rewritten, somewhat 'happy' ending confected by director and screenwriter). (269)

Similar to Maxine and Shannon's settlement, Marguerite grudgingly accepts to enter into a partnership with Jacques.

Earlier in the play, Marguerite realizes how her life has come full circle when she proclaims, "You know what it is: that I am one of those *aging*—

voluptuaries—who used to be paid for pleasure but now have to pay! (496). She is fully cognizant of her new role in the economy of desire, and this kind of awareness is comparable to that of another "aging voluptuary":

> Mrs. Stone knew, as well as Paolo knew it, that to become the aggressor in a relationship is to forsake an advantage. She, too, had once held the trump card of beauty which he was now holding and she had held it for such a long time that, although she now admitted to herself in private moments of candor that it was no longer hers, her social manner and procedure were still based upon its possession. (31)

However, forming such business deals, much like willingly entering loveless marriages, has both personal and societal consequences, as Williams opines in a letter to his friend Donald Windham. In the missive, he explains the havoc caused by infelicitous marriages and ill-suited relationships:

> All of us must sadly face the fact that we are make-shift arrangements. That our parents and their parents before them have wantonly bedded together and created anything and everything in the way of descendants that accident might arrange. No regard for good or bad mixtures, no regard for warring elements. Pies, sandwiches, cough syrups are put together with attention to what are congruous or suitable components – but not human beings! We are slapped together by any two bodies that happen to lust for each other. And told to live – and be good and decent and render a good account of ourselves in the world! Naturally we don't. Naturally we have very little integrity, if any at all. Naturally the innermost "I" or "You" is lost in a sea of other disintegrated elements, things that can't fit together and that make an eternal war in our natures. (qtd. in Windham 92)

At war with themselves, the Williams characters discussed in this chapter have chosen to morally prostitute themselves by engaging in an often ignored form of prostitution.

Williams's phrase "make-shift arrangements" brings to mind the makeshift settlements of numerous Williams couples (92). Seeking financial security or looking to mend a broken heart, they either enter into mutually beneficial relationships (Marguerite Gautier and Jacques Casonova; Maxine Faulk and Reverend Shannon; Dorothea Gallaway and Buddy Bodenhafer) or loveless marriages (Ralph and Dorothea Bates; Jabe and Lady Torrance, Joe and Vera Cartwright). Ultimately, their involvement in this figurative form of prostitution ties them to the moral prostitutes listed in chapter three (pimps, procurers, and profiteers) and links them to the literal prostitutes presented in chapter two.

Conclusion

> "God bless all con men and hustlers and pitchmen who hawk their hearts on the street, all two-time losers who're likely to lose once more, the courtesan who made the mistake of love, the greatest of lovers crowned with the longest horns, the poet who wandered far from his heart's green country and possibly will and possibly won't be able to find his way back, look down with a smile tonight on the last cavaliers, the ones with the rusty armor and soiled white plumes, and visit with understanding and something that's almost tender those fading legends that come and go in this plaza like songs not clearly remembered, oh, sometime and somewhere, let there be something to mean the word *honor* again!" (585-586)
>
> – Esmeralda, *Camino Real*

This dissertation has explored the prevalent leitmotif of prostitution in the work of Tennessee Williams. It has shown how prostitution, "the falling trade" (Shugg 296), and the theatre, "the base trade" (Lenz 833) became historically linked because of their proximity to one another (the red-light district and the theatre district) and because of their shared sites of exchange (the theatres themselves). Another interconnection between the two trades is their common purpose to satisfy the scopophiliac desires (among others) of their respective customers (johns and theatregoers). This dissertation has also emphasized how prostitution played a dominant role in Williams's professional and personal life. It has suggested that Williams's uses of prostitution as a controlling trope stems from his lifelong preoccupation with, and involvement in, an amalgam of prostitutions. Artistically, Williams felt like a prostitute for compromising his art for the film industry (his frustrating screenwriting experience in Hollywood) and for the commercial theatre of the post-World

War II period. He was also worried about his indulgence in sexual prostitution since he patronized male prostitutes throughout his life.

Finally, this dissertation has presented a detailed inventory of the key players in the libidinal economy of Williams's work. It has underscored how most Williams characters are involved in one form of prostitution or another, by either getting paid for sex (Blanche DuBois, Chance Wayne), paying for sex (Princess Kosmonopolis, Sebastian Venable, Boss Finley), procuring sex (Violet Venable, Catharine Holly) or morally prostituting themselves for money and security by entering into loveless marriages (Ralph Bates, Lady Torrance, David Cutrere).

Williams's work eschews the stereotypical representation of prostitutes in literature as lower-class streetwalkers or morally bankrupt females or both. The playwright neither presents the prostitute as a romantic figure of transcendence nor as a rebellious one who threatens society. I have argued that the playwright uses a transgressive mode of fiction—the gothic—in conjunction with a transgressive practice—prostitution—to link the social classes and to blur the boundaries between the literal and the figurative prostitutes. In so doing, Williams offers a more calibrated, nuanced view of prostitution.

I have maintained that Williams's discourse is not didactic or moralistic, for he underlines the interdependence of buyer and seller—as well as procurer

and profiteer—by placing them on the same moral plane. Williams's non-judgmental stance on prostitution can best be summed up by Alma's statement in *Summer and Smoke*: "And I always say that life is such a mysteriously complicated thing that no one should really presume to judge and condemn the behavior of anyone else!" (148). I have revealed how Williams's work both reinforces the dominant culture's sexual hypocrisy and subverts the demonizing of the (sexual) other by so-called defenders of propriety, whose own immorality is similar to the deviance they associate with the persona of the prostitute.

Future scholars interested in theatre or prostitutes in literature, or both, may wish to investigate other twentieth- or twenty-first-century representations of the world's oldest profession in American drama. Fruitful academic work could be achieved by comparing Williams's treatment of prostitution with that of his predecessor, Eugene O'Neill. Another enterprising project—the exploration of prostitution in the work of Williams and his successor, Lanford Wilson—is long overdue.

Serving as an epigraph to this section, Esmeralda's incantation in *Camino Real* reflects Williams's positive view of the fugitive kind, which includes the historically marginalized, abjected, and othered figure of the prostitute. Her invocation links together the various types of prostitutes that appear in Williams's work. This dissertation has shown that by depicting child prostitutes, female streetwalkers, male hustlers, gay-for-pay studs, pimps,

procurers, brothel operators, the morally compromised powers that be, and those who prostitute themselves by entering into loveless marriages, Williams has effectively and incontrovertibly dramatized whoredom in all of its forms.

Endnotes

[1] For a discussion of prostitution before the beginning of the professional theatre in the 1570s, see Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[2] To further understand this point, see Ann Jennalie Cook, "'Bargaines of Incontinencies': Bawdy Behavior in the Playhouses," *Shakespeare Survey*, 10 (1977): 271-290.

[3] Here is the entire epilogue:

PANDARUS. A goodly medicine for my aching bones! O
world, world, world! Thus is the poor agent despised.
O traitors and bawds, how earnestly are you set awork,
and how ill requited. Why should our endeavour be so
loved and the performance so loathed? What verse for
it, what instance for it? –
Let me see:
Full merrily the humble-bee doth sing
Till he hath lost his honey and his sting;
And being once subdu'd in armed tail,
Sweet honey and sweet notes together fail.
Good traders in the flesh, set this in your painted
cloths:
As many as be here of Pandar's hall,
Your eyes, half out, weep out at Pandar's fall;
Or if you cannot weep, yet give some groans,
Though not for me, yet for your aching bones.
Brethren and sisters of the hold-door trade,
Some two months hence my will shall here be made.
It should be now, but that my fear is this:
Some galled goose of Winchester would hiss.
Till then I'll sweat and seek about for eases,
And at that time bequeath you my diseases. (Shakespeare 1187)

[4] Shugg concludes his article by explaining that because of the massive expansion of London during Shakespeare's time, prostitution became omnipresent: "The spread of prostitution was greatly aided by the rapid, unrestrained growth of London during this period, a growth that produced slum areas, expecially [sic] in the suburbs east and west of the City where the profession could easily take root. Aside from the new slums, certain districts outside the City acted as a permanent magnet for the prostitute: Southwark and Shoreditch, because of their theatres and their location along the main routes to the north and south of England; Smithfield, because of its horse and cattle

market and annual Bartholomew Fair; and Westminster, because of its privileges of immunity, the Royal Court, and the influx of people when the law courts were in session and during the annual St. James Fair. And, too, the increasing numbers of hackney coaches afforded the prostitute a new mobility, enabling her to solicit at will in every part of the City by the early seventeenth century. The presence of prostitution in and around St. Paul's Cathedral itself shows clearly that the problem was both pervasive and ineradicable" (306).

[5] Lenz borrows this expression from John Disney's 1729 work, *A View of Ancient Laws, Against Immorality and Profaneness* (Cambridge: Corn. Crownfield and John Crownfield, 1729). In it, Disney railed against the romantic comedy, "whose Argument is generally some lewd Intrigue of Fornication or Adultery; the Wit and Language made up of Profaneness, Double Entendres of obscenity, and the contempt of whatever is grave and serious; the *main* drift, to instruct people in the Arts of debauching and the opportunities of being debauched" (305).

[6] Gilfoyle clarifies this point: "Prostitution functioned at the nexus of social relations in the nineteenth-century city. Bourgeois Americans sought to create an ideal world of public and private spheres separating vice from virtue, the illicit from the licit, the disreputable from the respectable. But such a divided, binary vision never conformed to reality. Prostitution blurred neat and easy distinctions between good and evil. 'Respectable' institutions and individuals directly supported and participated in the 'disreputable' underworld of New York. Ultimately, prostitution and the corresponding commercialization of sex exposed the limits and contradictions in the ways nineteenth-century New Yorkers defined 'freedom'" (19).

[7] In *Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1987), Hobson addresses several cultural moments that helped shape the different policies of prostitution in the U.S. from 1800-1950.

[8] Riegel borrows the line, "but richly decorated and splendid gateways to the haunts of prostitution, to the chambers of death" from Rev. Rufus W. Clark's *Lectures on the Formation of Character, Temptations and Mission of Young Men* (Boston: John P. Jewett & Co., 1853), 120.

[9] Basing her assertion on Olive Logan's *Before the Footlights and Beyond the Stage* (Philadelphia: Parmelee and Co., 1870), Johnson affirms the following: "By the 1880s, however, writers sympathetic with as well as those antagonistic to the stage seem to have agreed that the third tiers of all legitimate theaters were finally closed" (579).

[10] For scholars interested in the history of drama, Jackson's study, *The Broken World of Tennessee Williams* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), includes a detailed summary of the major cycles in the development of drama.

[11] Fleche's book, *Mimetic Disillusion: Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, and U.S. Dramatic Realism* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1997), provides one of the very best analyses of America's foremost playwrights.

[12] In his article, "Chance's Main Chance: Richard Brooks's *Sweet Bird of Youth*," Palmer reiterates this view: "Though sensations for the most part on stage, the early plays of Tennessee Williams have only become widely known to the American and world public through their re-production by the Hollywood cinema. All of Williams's commercially produced plays of this period, *Camino Real* alone excepted, were made into commercial films, a record matched by no other playwright" (25).

[13] Williams's first long play is *Candles to the Sun* (1937).

[14] In a foreword (with Anne Jackson) to *Mister Paradise and Other One-Act Plays*, Eli Wallach recalls Williams's compassion for prostitutes: "I was asked by Joshua Logan at the Actors Studio to direct *Hello from Bertha*, a play about an over-the-hill prostitute who was being evicted from her apartment. I was struck by Tennessee's empathy and sensitivity for the plight of the women—as American officers in North Africa we were ordered to raid the whorehouses to protect the health of our soldiers" (xi).

[15] Leverich successfully completed the first volume of Williams's biography in 1995, but he died in 2000 while preparing to write the final volume, which would cover Williams's rise to national prominence in 1945 to his death in 1983. The completion of this biography has been entrusted to John Lahr, who is the senior drama critic at the *New Yorker* magazine.

[16] For further information on the disastrous reception of Williams's *Battle of Angels*, see Leverich, *Tom: The Unknown Tennessee Williams* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 390-396.

[17] Savran addresses Williams's lasting legacy: "I believe that Williams's plays offer far more than the minor adjustment to the rhetoric of homophobia tentatively negotiated by the work of most of his contemporaries. By impugning the sovereignty of the well-made play and of theatrical naturalism, by mobilizing a surrealistic scenic poetry, by reconfiguring bourgeois subjectivity, by undermining conventionalized presentations of sexuality and gender, they offer a radical—if incompletely realized—challenge to Cold War hegemony, and bestow an inheritance that a progressive theater of the 1990s can ill afford to ignore" (88).

[18] Devlin and Tischler also mention that Williams refused to discuss his sex life with Kinsey when they met in November 1950 (*Selected Letters* 286). About that encounter, John S. Bak muses: "Though Devlin and Tischler contend that Williams 'declined to give his own sexual history' during that November meeting (*SL II* 286n), one can only wonder what else they might have talked about during their 'four and a half hour talk' (*SL II* 535)" (253n69).

[19] For further information on Williams's familiarity with, and use of, the language of prostitution, see Clum, *Acting Gay* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 293n17.

[20] For a detailed account of the personal and professional relationship between Williams and Kazan, see Brenda Murphy, *Tennessee Williams and Elia Kazan: A Collaboration in the Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[21] Williams discusses this topic in a letter to his friend Carson McCullers dated August 1952: "It's awful how quickly a theatrical reputation declines on the market. A few years ago and I could have anything I wanted in the theatre, now I have to go begging. Two plays that didn't make money and, brother, you're on the skids!" (*Selected Letters* 444). Along the same lines, Williams discusses his goal in writing the novel, *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*: "My object in this novella was to show the ugly and awful mutations that may occur through the obsessive pursuit of a high position, the 'power-drive' as we see it so much in our society, particularly in the theatre where it seems to be thrown in

particularly sharp focus. And I wanted to make the reader feel more compassion than disgust for the rapacious bird-woman" (*Selected Letters* 337).

[22] In one of those letters dated 10 April 1948, Williams states that, "[t]he biggest and loudest talkers are the 'ragazzi,' the young male whores and hoodlums, who hang out for sale in the Galleria at night. They are always having hot arguments of some kind but I doubt that they are invariably concerned with politics" (qtd. in Windham 215).

[23] Like Williams, O'Neill also enjoyed the company of prostitutes, as Katie N. Johnson points out in this detailed endnote: "It's worth noting that O'Neill interacted with prostitutes in his early days hanging out in New York dives such as Hell Hole, Jimmy-the-Priests, as well as in brothels in Buenos Aires and Liverpool (see Gelb 129, 152, 161, 166). The Gelbs reported that during O'Neill's days on the New York waterfront 'once again his female companions were mainly whores' (163). O'Neill once tried to get back at his father by inviting 'a girl from a French bordello' as his companion in the theater, hoping his breach would be reported back to James (129). It was. And, to facilitate his divorce with his first wife, Kathleen, O'Neill agreed to be caught in a brothel on 148 West 45th Street (173). O'Neill and his brother Jamie also had at least one notable drunken 'triumphant siege of a bordello' before attending the theater and disrupting their father's performance (183)." ("'Anna Christie'" 9n1).

[24] For those interested in such an approach in regards to Williams, see Nicholas Pagan, *Rethinking Literary Biography: A Postmodern Approach to Tennessee Williams* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1993).

[25] Henceforth, the abbreviation *CS* will be used to refer to Williams's *Collected Stories*.

[26] For those interested in an analysis of Williams's short stories, see Dennis Vannatta's *Tennessee Williams: A Study of the Short Fiction* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988).

[27] Spoto comments on Sebastian's surname: "'Venable' is an old form of the word 'venal,' and as late as the last century it meant both able to buy and able to corrupt, capable of being bribed, of unprincipled character, and associated with sordid and corrupt influences (*cf. Oxford English Dictionary*)" (221).

[28] Caroline H. Dall once stated, prostitution was motivated by "the want of bread" (qtd. in Riegel 447). In Spanish, *pan* means "bread," and that is the food for which the boys of Cabeza de Lobo are clamoring.

[29] In "A Streetcar Named *Interior: Panic*," Bray provides a further link between Blanche DuBois and Reverend Shannon: "In *Interior Panic*, Blanche's last name is 'Shannon.' [. . .] He would return to 'Shannon' for the main character in *The Night of the Iguana*" (4).

[30] In the film adaptation of *The Night of the Iguana*, Maxine Faulk is played by Ava Gardner. In his biography, *Ava Gardner: "Love Is Nothing*," (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2006), Lee Server includes a quote by Sandy Whitelaw (who worked as Gardner's assistant on the film set of *The Night of the Iguana*) that underscores how much the actress's life imitated her art: "We remained friends from then on, though at the location I didn't see much of her away from the set. I ended up hanging out more with Burton and Taylor. Ava went off to live very separately from the rest. She had her own interests there. The rumor was that she was getting to know some of the local beachboys" (417).

[31] David Savran defines the term *marchetta* as follows: "Mrs. Stone herself is characterized as having been a 'tomboy' in her youth (p. 100) while Paolo, her more or less heterosexual gigolo, is identified by a feminine Italian noun, as a 'marchetta,' which may be translated as either (female) prostitute or (male) homosexual (p.51)" (117).

[32] This is the titular short story of Williams's 1948 short fiction collection, *One Arm and Other Stories* (New York: New Directions, 1948). Devlin and Tischler underscore the book's notoriety: "*One Arm and Other Stories* (1948)—reissued by New Directions in December 1954—'wears the scent of human garbage as if it were the latest Parisian perfume.' The *Time* reviewer also surmised that TW had 'raided' *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), Krafft-Ebing's study of sexual deviation, for his own case studies of 'male and female prostitutes, harridans, and homosexuals'" (*Selected Letters* 563n).

[33] Like Oliver, Kilroy in *Camino Real* is a down-and-out boxer who knows his potential value in the sexual economy: "I'd hustle my heart on this street, I'd peddle my heart's true blood before I'd leave my golden gloves hung up in a loan shark's window between a rusted trombone and some poor lush's long-ago mildewed tuxedo!" (467).

[34] Regarding Val's relationship with the lady osteopath, Carol Cutrere intimates that he is caught in the trappings of prostitution: "You told us that it [a ring] was a gift from a lady osteopath that you'd met somewhere in your travels and that any time you were broke you'd wire this lady osteopath collect, and no matter how far you were or how long it was since you'd seen her, she'd send you a money order for twenty-five dollars with the same sweet message each time" (244-245).

[35] In her article, "When a Door is a Jar, or Out in the Theatre: Tennessee Williams and Queer Space," Fleche provides an anecdote that speaks to Clum's quote: "Asked by a stranger at a party what he did for a living, Merlo is reported to have replied, 'I sleep with Mr. Williams.'" (257n20).

[36] Leverich describes Bourbon Street as "vulgarity's epitome, the sacred province of the French Quarter pimps, prostitutes, and male hustlers" (285).

[37] The tension between Lot and his brother, Chicken, over the former's sudden marriage to Myrtle will be discussed in greater detail in chapter four.

[38] Undoubtedly, Fraser is the bad boy of Canadian theatre and one of the most critically acclaimed and commercially successful playwrights in North America. His two most celebrated plays are *Unidentified Human Remains and the True Nature of Love* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Blizzard Publishing, 1990), cited in *Time* magazine as one of the ten best plays of 1989, and *Poor Super Man* (Edmonton, Alberta: NeWest Press, 1995), listed by *Time* magazine as one of the ten best plays of 1994.

[39] In the notes to *Mister Paradise and Other One-Act Plays*, Moschovakis refers to the unpublished playlet, *Lily and La Vie, or The Chain Cigarette*, in which the titular character chases after a delivery boy. He opines that, "the conclusion suggests a distant kinship between Lily Yorke and Blanche DuBois, whose libido is aroused by the young subscription-collector in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, as well as Lily's relationship to Alma Winemiller in *Summer and Smoke* and *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale*" (232).

[40] For a more extensive discussion of Sebastian and his poetry, see Steven Bruhm, "Blond Ambition: Tennessee Williams's Homographesis," *Essays in Theatre/Études théâtrales*, 14 (1996): 97-105.

[41] Listing the different types of love presented in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Tischler mentions the following: "love of parent for child (which Big Mama feels to an almost incestuous degree for Brick)" (*Rebellious Puritan* 215).

[42] Tennessee Williams, "Will God Talk Back to a Playwright? Interview by David Frost, in *Conversations with Tennessee Williams*, ed. Albert J. Devlin (Jackson, MS, 1986), 146.

[43] Besides its application to *Sweet Bird of Youth* and *Suddenly Last Summer*, Irigaray's definition of hom(m)o-sexuality will be further illustrated in the discussion of the plays *Orpheus Descending* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* in chapter four.

[44] Paller comes to Sebastian's defense (not to mention Williams's) by dismissing critics who simply view the character as an unredeemable predator: "Clum and others accuse Sebastian and Williams of objectifying their 'victims' in the basest way. Clum points to Catharine's recollection of Sebastian being 'famished for blonds, he was fed up with the dark ones and was famished for blonds' and points out the similar language Williams used in a letter to Donald Windham. According to this view, *Suddenly Last Summer* is no more than a personal psychodrama of self-accusation and punishment concerning homosexual guilt. Being fed up with dark ones and famished for light ones, however, is no different from any person's description of their favorite sexual type. Williams just happens to be honest about having one" (147).

[45] Clum draws the following similarity between the aspiring actors depicted in Inge's and Williams's work: "Both playwrights idealized and sentimentalized male beauty. The dream of their hunks is Hollywood, that apex of narcissism and factory for American dreams, but they are too nice and too innocent to succeed in such a predatory environment" (*Acting Gay* 185).

[46] In their notes to Williams's one-act play, *Escape*, Moschovaskis and Roessel discuss texts in which Williams addresses racism and its deleterious consequences, particularly the lynchings of black men (*Mister Paradise* 231).

[47] For a radical approach to the contemporary debate over prostitution, see Belinda J. Carpenter, *Re-Thinking Prostitution: Feminism, Sex, and the Self* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000).

[48] For a fine summary of the types of direct and indirect prostitution, see Christine Harcourt and Basil Donovan, "The Many Faces of Sex Work," *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, 81 (2005): 201-206.

[49] Devlin and Tischler explain that the editing change proposed by Williams in a letter to James Laughlin on 18 May 1948 would have compromised the integrity of the story: "Canceling the passage in 'One Arm' cited by TW would have removed all reference to 'the blue-movie' made on the broker's yacht, as well as Oliver Winemiller's first exposure to such pornography while a sailor on leave in Marseille. Only the Marseille scene, which occurs in a brothel, and snatches of dialogue from 'the blue-movie' were cut in the 1948 edition of *One Arm*—some twenty-eight lines in all" (*Selected Letters* 195n).

[50] For further analysis of Moon Lake, see Donald Pease, "Reflections on Moon Lake: The Presences of the Playwright," in *Tennessee Williams: A Tribute*, ed. Jac Tharpe (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1977), 829-847.

[51] Regarding "pretty traps," Parker explains that in relation to *The Glass Menagerie*, the one-act play, *The Pretty Trap*, "should be considered a 'spin-off' rather than a 'source'" (Foreword to *The Pretty Trap* 3).

[52] According to David Kaplan, Williams engaged in a similar form of hustling during his employment at The Beggar's Bar in Greenwich Village: "She [Valeska] briefly employed Williams to read his poems there, then he would circulate among the tables for some reward, like the characters of Hannah and Nonno in Williams' play *The Night of the Iguana*. Unlike Hannah and Nonno, Williams wore a black eye-patch with a white eyeball painted on it by Fritz Bultman. Valeska fired Williams when he would not share his tips" (62).

[53] Sinatra debuted this song in 1955 during NBC's "Producer's Showcase" of a televised musical of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, in which he played the Stage Manager.

[54] Lowell uses this expression in his poem, "Memories of West Street and Lepke," published in the collection, *Life Studies* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Cudahy, 1959).

[55] "Three of the four most critically acclaimed and commercially successful playwrights of the postwar period were closeted homosexuals whose plays were supported by the critical establishment so long as they maintained the conventions of the closet drama. Of the pantheon of Tennessee Williams, William Inge, Edward Albee, and Arthur Miller, only Miller was heterosexual" (Clum, *Acting Gay*, 149).

[56] In *Notebooks* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), edited and annotated by Margaret Bradham Thornton, Williams talks about the women for whom he cared and expresses disappointment over one his closest friend's decision to marry: "Most deeply (after Hazel) were two other extraordinary women: Marion Black Vacarro and Maria Britneva, now Known as The Lady St. Just. It is sadly true that the latter of these two ladies appears to me, now, to have settled for things ~~unacceptable~~ unimpressive to me: ~~grandeur of~~ title and wealth by marriage" (753).

[57] Hirsch raises questions about Baby Doll's virginity (103).

[58] Kazan discusses his film's denouement: "Because I meant to keep a certain mystery in the film, it was never made clear what happened. When Silva (Eli Wallach) lies in the crib and she's tucking him in, there's a fade-out. Then he's fast asleep and she's sitting at the foot of the crib. . . . Because so much was made of her thumb in her mouth, there was the assumption by some people that she went down on him during the fade-out; or that some sort of overt physical sexual act had been performed. But it really doesn't matter at all, because that's not what the picture is about, and *I* never thought anything did happen. I just thought of him at first teasing her then falling asleep in the crib and taking a nap" (qtd. in Ciment 79-80).

[59] Tischler provides the following insight into Maxine's personality: "Maxine has outlived one husband and proudly advertises her sexuality, planning to select a new king for her mountain, whom she will also outlive. She is no monster—any more than Maggie is a monster. She is a full-blooded woman who loved Fred, loves Shannon, and can love again when Shannon has gone. She did not kill Fred, but she does not mourn him deeply. Like Maggie, she is no willing participant in rituals of self-destruction. And also, like Maggie, her lust for life takes brutal forms that may appear excessive" ("Gallery of Witches" 506-507).

[60] Because of the rigid and censorious Production Code that governed the production of movies from 1934 to 1968 (Palmer, "Hollywood in Crisis," 208-212; Savran 84), administrators of the Code, such as Will Hays and Joseph Breen, wished to prevent the discussion or depiction of challenging subject matter, particularly issues surrounding sexuality. Regarding Kazan's film adaptation of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, they insisted that Stanley needed to be punished for raping Blanche. As a result, Stella firmly rejects him with the following denunciation: "Don't you touch me again. We're not going back with you."

[61] In the play, there is only a slight variation to Val's self-praise: "Well, they say that a woman can burn a man down. But I can burn down a woman" (264).

[62] In *Sex, Art, and American Culture: Essays* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), Paglia states that, "Marlon Brando's raw, brute, comic performance as Stanley Kowalski, in the play and the 1951 film, was one of the most spectacular and explosive moments in modern art" (93).

[63] Her appearances bookend the "kitchen sink draft," to borrow Williams's phrase, of the play (*Selected Letters* 288). Devlin and Tischler point out some textual variations: "From 'outline' to first draft stage, there was development rather than fundamental change in the basic elements of *The Rose Tattoo*. Rosario's mistress, originally a voice heard 'sobbing over the phone,' was dramatically cast as Estelle Hohengarten, a thin blonde prostitute from Texas who appears in the opening and closing scenes. At the final curtain she and Pepina kneel to gather the ashes of Rosario—an addition to the outline as well—which Pepina has long venerated but impulsively scattered after learning of her husband's betrayal" (*Selected Letters* 288n).

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